

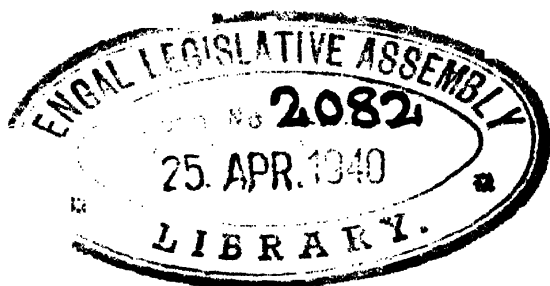
PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT:

- **A FAILURE?**

PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT: A FAILURE?

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OUR COUNTRY

OUR country is more to be valued and higher and holier far than mother or father or any ancestor, and more to be regarded in the eyes of the gods, and of men of understanding; also to be gently and reverently entreated when angry, even more than a father, and if not persuaded, obeyed. And when we are punished by her, whether with imprisonment or stripes, the punishment is to be endured in silence; and if she lead us to wounds or death in battle, thither we follow as is right; neither may any one yield or retreat or leave his rank, but whether in battle or in court of law, or in any other place, he must do what his country order him; or he must change their view of what is just; and if he may do no violence to his father or mother, much less may he do violence to his country. For the laws will say to him: "After having brought you into the world, and nurtured and educated you, and given you and every other citizen a share in every good which we had to give, we have further proclaimed to every citizen that if he does not like us when he has come of age and has seen the ways of the State, he may go where he pleases, and take his goods with him, and we will not forbid him nor interfere with him. But he who has had experience of the manner in which we order justice and administer the State, and still remains, has entered into a contract that he will do what we command him. And he who disobeys us is thrice wrong: firstly because, in obeying us, he is disobeying his parents; secondly, because we are the authors of his education; thirdly, because he has made an agreement with us that he will duly obey our commands.—SOCRATES. •

INTRODUCTION

THE purpose of this book is to suggest that the grave, and quickly-growing, evils afflicting national administration in the United Kingdom threaten disaster ; that they are implicit in, indeed the direct consequence of, our system of Parliamentary rule, and cannot be cured without such radical change of that system as to bring truly responsible government.

To scold this or that party of politicians is an easy task—from the speeches of any one set of them can be gathered ample testimony that the other sets are ruinous ; but it is a futile task. Better to face boldly the truth : that the fault is not so much with the men who work the political system as with the system itself.

That system has been altogether corrupted from its original purpose, which was to call to the help of the councils of the State men worthy to share in its rule, and representative of those who have to maintain the State. British Parliamentary rule was evolved on the principle of “no taxation without representation”. It is based to-day on the principle of swamping completely

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the representation of those who pay the bulk of the taxation. The power is in the hands of the great majority who receive from the State in benefits and subsidies more than they pay in taxes ; and the invitations to entrust the exercise of that power to any one of the political parties are based on advocacy of measures which will add to what they receive from the State and reduce the taxes which they will be called on to pay.

The British polyarchy represents rule by 28,800,000 voters, of whom about 26,000,000 are beneficiaries *in esse* or *in posse* of the various State charities (pensions, housing subsidies, educational subsidies, etc.) to a greater extent than they are contributors to the State revenues. Of the 28,800,000 not 50,000 pay the full rate of Income Tax, and only 2,225,000 pay any Income Tax at all. The exploitation of a powerless minority for the supposed benefit of the great majority has become the guiding principle of Parliamentary government.

Government under that system is tainted in its every action, at home and abroad, by this corruption. If it is incurable, the British Empire must die, as did the Roman Empire, of "bread and circuses" politics. But there is ground for hope, provided by the experience of one modern

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nation, that there is an alternative to that system. If in one country an alternative has proved practicable, why not in Great Britain?

That question will be dealt with after some facts have been advanced showing the working in recent years of "democratic Parliamentary rule".

It is regrettable that, in advancing those facts, some personal references to a few leading politicians will be necessary. If they could have been omitted they would have been, for the politician is usually rather the victim of the system than a consciously malevolent agent for his country's downfall.

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CHAPTER I

The Parliament Superstition

THE faith that Parliamentary rule—in the sense of entrusting unlimited control of the affairs of a people to a body elected by the votes of its adults—is the best system of government, is generally held. To question it in England nowadays appears to be as impracticable as it was, fifty years ago, to question the belief that all children should be infected with measles ; or to doubt that Newton's law of gravitation expressed the last word in the physics of the universe.

When it has been questioned, usually the question has not been put in set terms, and has been ignored as having no application to reality ; as being merely the whimsy of an eccentric philosopher. There could be imagined no more destructive criticism of one aspect of the case for

democratic Parliamentary rule than is contained in Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*. That drama portrays, without exaggeration, the normal course of events in any community when a question of right comes into conflict with the selfish interests of the majority. As a practical lesson in politics it is ignored, even by those who recognize how true, how natural, is the reaction of the Labour Party and the Citizens' League in Ibsen's comedy to the discovery that cleansing the public baths from sewage is going to touch their pockets.

The growth of the faith in the sovereign efficacy of democratic Parliamentary rule as a remedy for all ills is the chief feature of the political history of the past half-century. For a backward nation lagging in the path of progress the one remedy prescribed has been a Parliament and the education of its people, so that they might become voters: and this remedy has been accounted universally applicable, as efficacious in China as in Haiti or Turkey. Nor has faith in the efficacy of the act of voting as a sure means of national regeneration been limited by any half-hearted doubts as to whether the value of this act of voting was dependent in any degree on the knowledge of the voter as to whom or what he was voting for. In India the

franchise was conferred on people who could not read a ballot-paper, but who were enabled to vote by the use of symbols indicating the candidates ; and similar expedients have been adopted elsewhere to help illiterates to elect Parliaments.

When a nation already has a Parliament, but still lacked perfection in the administration of its affairs, the explanation was sought in the fact that the Parliament was not sufficiently "democratic" in its basis or was prevented by some constitutional or traditional barrier from exercising full sway over the lives of the people. Thus in Great Britain the franchise for electing the House of Commons was extended to all adult males and females, at the same time as the old powers of check and revision once held by the Throne and an hereditary House of Legislature were reduced to a shadow : in the United States a constitutional amendment gave to the voters authority to enforce abstinence from alcoholic drinks on all citizens. (When, as is seriously proposed in some quarters there, another constitutional amendment will authorize compulsory abstinence from tobacco, a further step towards the perfection of Parliamentary rule will be recorded.)

Perfection in the Parliamentary system, it is

made clear by its champions, comes when a Parliament can exercise unlimited power over the domestic lives of the people it governs, and over their relations with their world neighbours : and when such a Parliament is elected on the broadest basis of adult voting (later there may be question as to the illogical exclusion of those below adult age from the right to vote, but that has not come yet).

This stage of perfection of Parliamentary government has been reached in Great Britain, where all adults have practically an equal voice in the election of the House of Commons : where that House of Commons has but the shadow of a shade of restriction on its absolute power—the House of Lords being able to delay certain of its decisions from coming into effect for a short period : and where there is no written Constitution or fundamental law limiting its authority. The British House of Commons could, if it so decided, make illegal the drinking of milk or the wearing of woollen cloth.

No other important country has come to the same stage of perfection : elsewhere there are Senates or other revising bodies, reservations of power to the Monarch or the President, and in some cases to a judicial body. Thus Australia, which at the beginning of this century

possessed the most advanced system of Parliamentary government, has not kept pace with British Constitutional change. The Australian House of Representatives (elected by adult suffrage in small constituencies) is checked by the Senate (elected by adult suffrage in much larger constituencies), by the Governor-General, who has the power of dissolution independently of the advice of his Ministers: and by the written Constitution, of which the guardian is the Federal High Court, which may veto legislation which is "unconstitutional".

It will be convenient, then, to keep this examination of the working of Parliamentary government chiefly to Great Britain, with occasional references to other parts of the British Empire and to foreign countries. The examination cannot aim to be exhaustive, but rather to suggest discussion of the system which, having its first origin in this country, appropriately enough has been brought here to full development.

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The faith in Parliamentary government is nourished by certain phrases of the order of incantations, mostly of British origin, but some adopted from other countries. Examples are

"Liberty", "Self-government", the "Consent of the governed", "Government by the people of the people for the people", "The voice of the people is the voice of God", "Now we must educate our masters". It is necessary to examine these incantations to ascertain if they have any real meaning consistent with facts, and not to accept them as if they were terms of the creed of a divinely-revealed faith. If Parliamentary rule promoted the liberty of the citizens to carry on their lives free from any more interference than is necessary to prevent their actions interfering with the freedom of others, that would be a strong argument in its favour, and would condone in some measure faults of inefficiency and of extravagance. But it is necessary to inquire into, not to assume the truth of these "slogans". To ascertain, for example, if the liberty of the individual to live his own life with reasonable regard for the lives of others is secured by Parliamentary government; whether indeed it is not violated to a greater degree under that system than under other systems which do not regard the ballot-box as the infallible testing instrument of right and wrong; to inquire whether Parliamentary institutions in their full perfection do secure "self-government" and the free "consent of the

governed" to the acts of government ; to consider critically the value of other catch-cries, the clamour of which is used to shout down the truth.

Some of the incantations need only a glance to be recognized as ridiculous—an example is that paradox about "educating our masters", which is inane when applied to any practical affair of life. Others are more specious, but, nevertheless, must not be allowed to shout down the call for a clear answer to these two questions :

1. What is the method of electing Parliament under a system of adult suffrage? Is that method likely to secure the choice of the most suitable men to control a nation?

2. In practical working, what have been the results of democratic Parliamentary government in such matters as foreign policy, financial administration, the carrying on of trade and industry, social welfare, the safeguarding of the liberty of the individual?

True answers to these questions will establish, I believe, the fact that faith in democratic Parliamentary government as a *good* system of government is a superstition, as gross and unreasonable as the faith of some negroes in Mumbo Jumbo. But there will still remain the

question whether this polyarchy, this system of rule by numbers, of counting noses to determine whether a proposal is just or unjust, wise or unwise, with its inevitable accompaniments of humbug and bribery, is, though not a good system, the only possible system.

Perhaps the ultimate answer to that question will prove to be the pessimist one, and civilization is condemned to die "by the popular vote". But there is prompting to hope in the experience of one European nation which has set itself the task of proving that democratic Parliamentary government based on the principle of the bribery of the electorate is not necessary: that it is a curable as well as a harmful superstition. This experiment is founded on the faith that the governance of a self-respecting community can be organized on the basis of setting up as the primary assumption the duty of the individual to serve the community, not the right of the individual to a share in the government of the community. It has a claim to sympathetic examination as offering one alternative to a system which is everywhere proving mischievous and threatening of disaster. If there is one alternative, may there not be another, some method of government in consistence with Anglo-Saxon ideas, which differ in some

respects from Latin ideas? The methods by which Signor Mussolini has regenerated Italy have proved their value in his community. In a British community some of them would be repugnant and probably unnecessary (for examples, the suppression of the liberty of the Press and of public meetings).

But the central idea of his policy is surely sound : that the relation of the individual to the organization begins with duty, and that any claim to authority accrues subsequently as the reward of duty faithfully performed. That idea is by no means strange to human society. It is indeed the normal, and the other idea—on which our present Parliamentary government is based—the abnormal. A man entering on his career in a profession, an industry, or a trade, does not expect at first more than the opportunity to share in its work, hoping to gain a share in its control after giving proof of capacity and fidelity. A soldier enlisting in an army does not expect the right to vote to elect the officers who will command him : he recognizes that his first duty is to obey, and that a share of authority can come to him only as the reward of good service. Practically all the affairs of civilized life are conducted on the same basis, not on the theory that "all men are born free and equal". No industry

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could carry on if its managers were chosen by election of its workers, in which competing candidates were free to appeal with offers of higher wages and more playtime ; no army, if periodically its officers had to appeal to the suffrages of their men, in competition with aspirants who could offer better rations, more pay, less "fatigues".

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To seek a reason why, in the sovereign affairs of a nation, a method of management is accepted which is utterly opposed to the method of management adopted in all its subsidiary affairs, is an interesting line of inquiry which can only be cursorily followed within the limits of this book. The Parliament superstition has its basis in a confusion of thought, partly religious, partly sentimental, partly arising from a misunderstanding of Constitutional history. The false analogy from religious thought can easily be perceived : every human being has a soul, therefore every human being should have a vote. The sentimental fallacies are more complex, but some of them are obvious : one man (or woman) is as good as another, therefore an equal franchise to elect the rulers over all ; all men (and women) are born free, therefore it is

only fair that all should have freedom to decide national issues—even though this theoretical freedom in practical effect enslaves them.

Parliamentary superstition finds its finest expression in the American Declaration of Independence: "all men are born free and equal". — That is fudge. The full degree of freedom of a new-born human is the freedom to die within a few hours if it is not nourished and sheltered by parents and society. Equality in any true sense of the word is non-existent: there are vast disparities of spiritual, mental, and physical equipment. Those who reject "the Divine right to rule of kings" to believe in a Divine right to rule enduing in infants or in human beings on reaching a certain age, reject a belief which might be defensible on the postulate of revealed religion to accept a fetish which is patently absurd. But it is the fetish on which our Parliamentary system is based.

The false clues coming from political history, and especially from British Constitutional history, can be traced to the misunderstanding that the widening *per se* of the basis of government, not the improvement of the method of government, was the objective of various Constitutional changes; that to grant the vote is the end, not merely the means to good government.

Logically, there is no case for granting the right to a share in the control of the country except to those who have earned the right, and who can be reasonably presumed to have the capacity to use it wisely. The presumption—which is that of our polyarchical system—that the necessity of obeying creates the right of those who obey to elect those whom they must obey has no foundation in reason, and also no valid basis in Constitutional history. The mistaken arguments in its favour from history seem to come from that development when personal service to the nation, giving a right to share in its councils, was commuted for money payments in lieu of personal service : this led to a franchise based apparently on wealth : this in time to the argument that the poor man is not necessarily inferior in sagacity to the richer man—an argument which lost sight of the fact that the original claim to a share in the government of the country was not wealth but service, capacity in the field, or at the council-table.

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What is to be sought is the government of a people by those most competent to govern : the fullest possible freedom of the governed, consistent with social order and safety, as to their

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lives, possessions and habits, and means by which the governors can be kept instructed as to the feelings of those whom they lead and can be checked from arbitrary action. The present system provides none of these, as the succeeding chapters will seek to show.

CHAPTER II

Choosing a Parliament

THE election of a Parliament to rule our nation is a serious, an almost sacred, act if we accept at their face value the incantations with which it is accompanied. The voters are solemnly told that "the destinies of the country are now in your hands". The contest for their votes is described as "an appeal to the sovereign will of the people".

These incantations have no relation to the facts. A General Election is under present conditions a squalid affair of humbug and corruption. The voters can be the victims of grave misrepresentation of the facts : are open to direct or indirect bribery, and have no impartial arbiter to assist them. There is no "Law of Evidence" in a Parliamentary election : the grossest falsehoods and the most extravagantly impertinent assertions can be put forward to influence the verdict. Against bribery and undue influence there is little precaution unless it takes the form of the direct purchase of votes, and even against that the precautions are imperfect.

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If it were the case (which it is not) that the voters came to the polls in a spirit of patriotic wisdom, determined to choose the best men for the government of the country, they would be faced with the difficulty that these "best men" were not offering themselves. Considering the list of the 1,500 or so candidates at any British General Election, would anyone venture to state that they represent the highest grade of the administrative, industrial, financial ability of the community? Would, indeed, anyone question that they are below, rather than above, the general average of its managing capacity? When the process of selecting candidates is examined, it will be clear that no more favourable result could be expected.

It is a false assumption (though a common one) that the Parliamentary system in Great Britain offers to voters as candidates for Parliamentary election something like a free choice of the would-be political leaders among the community. That is far from being the case. The party organizations dictate the limits of their choice. A candidature independent of those organizations is a great rarity. Theoretically a man of extraordinary energy and ability can secure election to Parliament without the help of one or other of the Party machines: in

practice it is very difficult (as even such a commanding personality as Disraeli discovered). It is more easy for a man who has once secured a seat to break away afterwards into a position of some independence, if he can carry with him the local section of his political machine : and it is still more easy for an unscrupulous adventurer, who is willing to invest a considerable sum in a Parliamentary seat, to win one as an Independent. It is a matter of money, organization, and humbug : the electors are to be humbugged in any case, but a retail effort outside the wholesale organization calls for more effort and more money.

Practically it may be assumed that the election of a Parliament begins with the selection of the candidates for the Parliament in the various constituencies by the Party organizations.

Of these there are in Great Britain at present three, the Conservative, the Socialist, and the Liberal. A study of their methods of working will show a remarkable degree of similarity considering the wide difference of their professions of policy. There are some divergences, but they are less striking than the similarities. All three find that the appeal to the sovereign people to decide the destinies of the nation is a matter of great expense. The people must be coaxed to

meetings at which they will hear the case put for the Party : to be fed with "literature", the name given to pamphlets and leaflets which are sometimes fair and correct in their statements of fact, though by no means always, and are rarely judicial and fair in their arguments from the facts : to be impressed by posters which will not hesitate to suggest a lie or conceal a truth, if that is to the "Party" advantage ; to be "educated" by subsidized newspapers ; to be "canvassed" in personal interviews, wherein the spoken word allows a much greater degree of falsehood and misrepresentation than is prudent in printed arguments. The cost of this is great ; the electoral law imposes a limit on expenditure, but this legal limit is a high one ; and in addition a great deal of ingenuity is normally exercised to spend something beyond the limit without incurring risk of penalties.

For example, the electoral law forbids the commercial hire of vehicles to convey voters to the polling booths : but some of the sovereign people will not carry out their august duties unless they are given this free conveyance. The party organizations therefore arrange for the loan of conveyances from friends of candidates, or of the party. Friendship in this regard has a wide interpretation. When a Conservative

Chancellor of the Exchequer recently imposed a tax on bookmakers, their resentment was translated into friendship with the Opposition Party, and Socialist candidates at subsequent by-elections could call on the help of the luxurious cars of the agents of gambling (whose occupation represents perhaps the most harmful levy on the earnings of the workers). As subsequently a Socialist Chancellor of the Exchequer thought fit to abolish the registration tax on these gentry, it may be presumed that the Socialist Party organization will have a permanent call on their chariots.

The various Party machines having the choice of the candidates, and being able to veto in almost all cases independent candidates, are, in effect, the true makers of Parliaments ; and as, to secure the election of their candidates, they must have Party funds, the first corruption of the Parliamentary system comes with the raising of those funds. The methods employed are the most closely guarded secrets of the system of democratic Parliamentary government. No Party submits its methods to public examination. But facts leak out in regard to all parties, and in the case of the Socialist Party circumstances dictate a fairly full degree of public knowledge.

The Socialist Party sanctions, for many years

practised, and hopes to be able shortly to practise again, a system of compulsory levy on the earnings of Trade Unionists for its political fund. This method of raising money to finance Socialist candidates was in the early years of the Party practised freely, until it was challenged by Mr. Walter V. Osborne, of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants. His objection to paying for the furtherance of political ideas in which he did not believe was brought before the Law Courts and sustained. Two expressions of judicial opinion elicited in the course of this case are worthy of record, in view of the subsequent refusal of the Socialist Party to abandon this method of extortion.

The Master of the Rolls held :

It is not competent to a Trade Union either originally to insert in its objects or by amendment to add to its objects something so wholly distinct from the objects contemplated by the Trade Union Acts as a provision to secure Parliamentary representation. Trade Unions comprise members of every shade of political opinion, and I cannot think it was the intention of the Legislature that it should be competent to a majority of the members to compel a minority to support by their votes, still less by their subscriptions, political opinions which they may abhor, under penalty not only of being expelled from the Union, and thus losing all chance of benefit, but also

the risk and, in some cases, the very serious risk, of not being able to find employment in their trade in consequence of the refusal of Trade Union members to work with non-Union members.

Lord Justice Farewell held :

It would be illegal for a landlord to compel his tenants, by means of covenant and proviso for re-entry, to subscribe to the funds of the particular Party that he supported, or for an employer to make his workmen, on pain of dismissal, subscribe to his Party funds; and it follows that, in my opinion, it is equally illegal for a Trade Union to compel their members to allow their funds to be applied, and themselves to subscribe as is proposed in the present case, and all the more so because their power is greater, as many of the members who preferred their principles to their Union would have to suffer greater sacrifices by giving up the benefits incident to a long membership in an old-established and wealthy Union. If this were not so, the position of the working man is indeed parlous. His own Trade Union may compel him to pay for A's return and maintenance in the House; his master's Trade Union may compel him to pay for B; and he himself may desire that V should represent him. Such compulsion is utterly opposed to the whole theory of representative government.

These clear statements of the rights of the Trade Unionist did not bring a change of heart to the Socialist Party leaders. Instead they sought and obtained by a bargain with the Liberal Party (then holding power with the

assistance of the Irish Nationalist Party and the Socialist Party) legal power for a Trade Union to levy on its members for political expenditure. By the Trade Union Act, 1913, a Trade Union was authorized to carry on any "lawful enterprise" (e.g., financing a newspaper). Thus a workman, forced into joining a Trade Union (because otherwise he would be boycotted from employment), might find his contributions used in part to carry on a Socialist newspaper, though he was opposed to Socialism. Under the same Act a Trade Union was authorized to levy a political fund to finance Socialist candidates for Parliament. True, the safeguard was provided that a member might "contract out" of paying this political levy. In practice this safeguard was largely illusory. Members of Trade Unions who were not Socialists were in many cases compelled or deceived into paying a levy to the funds of the Socialist Party.

In 1927 the Trade Disputes Act abolished the legal authorization given in 1913 to this strange example of the working of democratic Parliamentary government—the authorization for a majority in a Trade Union to dictate the political faith of a minority ; but in 1930 it is announced that it will be restored by the Socialist Government in power.

Throughout the somewhat bitter controversy concerning this Socialist method of financing candidatures for Parliament, the Socialists have used the argument that neither Conservative nor Liberal Party organizations have any moral right to object ; that they do not come into court with clean hands ; that among their methods of raising money are those of selling titular distinctions for cash and exacting large sums from industrial interests for value received or value promised. As before stated, the secrets of the collection of party funds are closely guarded : the public are not allowed to know whence or why contributions come. There cannot, therefore, be cited evidence from legal proceedings such as that which convicts the Socialist Party of disreputable and tyrannical means of financing the first stage of democratic government. But there is a mass of somewhat less precise information on the point which cannot be ignored, and which makes it morally certain that the Socialist accusation is true.

It is generally admitted that it is customary for some at least of those who are granted titles to show their gratitude by cash donations to the funds of the Party in power. It is naturally difficult to obtain legal proof that in some cases the cash gift is made a condition of the title being

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granted. But in 1922, when a Coalition of Liberals and Conservatives was in power, I obtained statements from several responsible gentlemen that they had been offered titular distinctions in return for cash payments.

I am convinced—and I think most reasonable persons are convinced—that both Liberal and Conservative Party organizations have been guilty of morally dubious methods of raising political funds.

The position may be fairly summarized as this : when circumstances have enforced publicity of the methods by which a party organization collects its funds, those are seen to be disreputable ; when secrecy can be kept, there are strongly-supported accusations of disreputable devices which a full disclosure could dissipate if they have no foundation in fact, but such a full disclosure is not made. It is a fair conclusion that the Party organizations which are responsible for the first, and perhaps the most important, stage in the election of a democratic Parliament, follow financial methods which will not stand the test of public opinion. Some of their money represents the honest contributions of supporters : other of their money represents extortion, traffic in "honours" and subsidies from interested domestic and foreign sources. '(That foreign

money and money from seditious parties within the Empire has been used to influence political decisions in Great Britain is an unhappy fact, and a natural outcome of the system.)

The political party organizations never find their money resources too ample. This business of shaping the course of democratic government is expensive. Apart from the great spendings at a General Election or a by-election, each Party aims to keep a permanent stipendiary agent in every constituency, and a large Headquarters staff of organizers, speakers, pamphleteers, artists. Consequently, when making the choice of suitable champions to represent the Party at the polls the ideal candidate is found to be one who will conform to Party discipline, and who can pay all the expenses of an election, and part, if not the whole, of the expense of permanent upkeep of the political machine in his constituency.* It is safe to say that no one who can conform to these financial conditions will be disappointed of a candidature.

* At the 1930 Conference of the Women's Unionist organization, the following resolution was carried without dissent: "That this Conference feels that as long as Conservatives expect their Parliamentary candidates to bear much of the expenses of local associations, and the whole of their election expenses, it will never be possible for many of the ablest and most suitable men and women to stand for the House of Commons in the Conservative interest."

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The idea is erroneous that a prior faith in the principles of the party, or any knowledge of political issues, is essential, or even of great importance. The great majority (some four-fifths) of the members elected to Parliament will be expected to do nothing more than to walk to and from the lobbies as directed by the Party Whips. Settled faith in any principles, or the knowledge to contribute usefully to Parliamentary debates, would be awkward rather than desirable. The Party machines know this, and are justified in making the chief qualifications for a candidate pliancy and willingness to contribute to the Party exchequer. The candidate will be supplied for his platform speeches with material from the organization: if he lacks even the faculty to prattle off intelligently what he has to say, that is not of serious consequence: there are capable hireling speakers available to support him at public meetings.

Again it is to some extent rather the misfortune than the superior unscrupulousness of the Socialist Party that in its records there shows up with the greatest clearness the fact that principles matter little in the choice of candidates. The Socialist Party finds it good policy to dress its shop window with a number of personages who will suggest to the electorate that there is nothing

dangerously revolutionary in its aims ; and seeks out these personages with unashamed frankness, making it clear that it has not only seats but offices and peerages to offer to the right sort of man. By becoming a Socialist a man can be sure of quick promotion if he is of such social standing that he will serve as an anæsthetic to the property-owners doomed to be exploited by "the weapon of taxation".

The Conservative Party is more devoted to the search of the ideal candidate, and more successful in securing him in large numbers, for it can draw upon a larger stock of young men with some means, who have a belief that they are serving the country in obeying that Party's Whips. The Socialist Party finds its candidate problems largely solved by the insistence of the Trade Unions, who supply so much of its funds, to nominate their own officials. The Liberal Party has fewer "ideal candidates", and shows an inclination to seek out bright young men with "careers" in prospect.

Being chosen in this way, the mass of the candidates at any General Election—whether the political leaders, the "Front Bench" men, actual and potential, or the rank and file whose great political qualification is to have obedient feet—do not represent the average of the leader-

ship capacity of the community. The legal profession is represented better than any other section (for which there are alternative explanations, of which the reader may make his choice : that the study of the law inspires a special fervour for public service, or that political life offers the least inconvenience and the greatest chances of advancement to lawyers). But (with the exception of the lawyers) the learned professions, the great industries and trades, the scientific life of the community, are poorly represented : and with each successive Parliament show a tendency to be more poorly represented as men of character and intelligence find that it is futile to hope to serve their country effectively by their presence in Parliament.

To guard against the possibility of being misunderstood, let me add that I do not suggest that the influence of money, secretly subscribed, on elections is a scandal peculiar to Great Britain. It can be found everywhere in the working of the system of Parliamentary government. In the United States money is the real arbiter of political issues. Let me quote the view of Mr. William B. Munro in that responsible American review *The Atlantic Monthly* (April, 1927) :—

Most of the momentum in government is provided by the action of various organized groups among

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the people, groups which have definite interests to serve, and which are aggressive in promoting them. These interest-groups as we may call them, work for the most part within the ranks of the party organization. Indeed, the chief function of the party organization is to furnish a cover or screen for the political activities of groups which desire to keep their true objectives invisible. When any racial, sectional, or economic element desires to make government serve its own special interest, there is never any open avowal of this design. That would be fatal to the end in view. The special interest must be in some way put forth as identical with the general interest, and must usurp a slogan that suggests democracy, justice, Americanism. Hence, when we demand that the laws shall guarantee the worker more than he is worth, we call it social justice. And when the ex-serviceman proceeds to raid the public treasury he calls it adjusted compensation. . . .

From first to last in the history of government the money power, the interest of vested wealth, has been the best organized, and, on the whole, the most enlightened determinant of public policy. . . . One might even go so far as to say that without the consistent direction of government by organized wealth throughout the ages we could not have either the form or the spirit of those political institutions which exist in the United States to-day. . . .

The whole course of American political development during the past fifty years has served to accentuate and facilitate the accumulation of political power in the hands of the emissaries of the rich. Franchises, patronage, and other gifts from the public authorities are worth a good deal more to the recipients than they used to be. The newer agencies of democracy, such as the direct primary, the

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initiative, referendum, and recall, the extension of the suffrage to women, and the removal of party designations from the ballot in local elections—all of them have served to increase, not to diminish, the cost of operating our electoral machinery. They have caused the diversion to politics of vastly larger sums than were formerly used. And it ought to be reasonably clear that, insofar as we make our politics more expensive to all who engage in them, we proportionately strengthen the power of those who have the money at their command. . . .

The human herd does not seek the thoroughbred and follow him. It trails the bell-wether with the loudest clang.

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The sovereign people, having had their candidates selected for them by the Party machines, are then subjected to intensive education to guide their choice. This "electioneering" is that process known as "educating our masters". Its main preoccupation is to seek good "election cries". Rarely is a good election cry a plain statement of truth or a sincere declaration of genuine belief. It may be a downright falsehood: that is not an objection if it is plausible and will represent the party employing it as the true friend of the people or its rivals as enemies of the people. Usually it is partly truth, partly falsehood, partly flapdoodle.

Glance back at the General Elections in Great Britain during this century. At the "Khaki" General Election the Conservative Party won an overwhelming majority on an excellent "election cry", that they best represented patriotism and the unity of the Empire. The events of the South African War had caused grave alarm among all serious students of public affairs, as they had revealed at the same time serious defects in the organization of the Empire, and the fact that every great foreign Power, without exception, viewed with envious hostility British world paramountcy, and was ready to end it at the first favourable opportunity. The "Khaki" election mandate was to undertake the reorganization of the national and Imperial system which was clearly necessary. The main principles which such a reorganization should follow were clear enough. Empire unity was a living fact : it could be strengthened by economic links and by a better distribution of the British race, encouraging migration from the overcrowded Mother Country to the under-populated daughter Dominions. The defence of the Empire was dangerously weak in relation to its responsibilities, and the envy which its vast possessions must necessarily inspire : that defence should be organized on a supreme Navy and a broader

military basis than the enlistment of a small professional Army. The social and industrial life of the Home Country gave too small opportunity of reasonable comfort, and of achieving economic independence to the masses of the people : in particular the passing of the land out of cultivation, and the absence of a peasant class of landowners were serious evils.

But the Government of the Parliament of the "Khaki" election, though it had one man at least of vision and of power, failed ingloriously. (Its failure, together with the equally inglorious failure in 1924—1929, are strong arguments that it is impossible to secure good government by the Parliamentary system ; when the voters by accident or design entrust a great task to a Party, the trust is not fulfilled.) The Government resulting from the "Khaki" election frittered away its life and prepared the way for the next General Election, which was largely fought and won by the Liberal Party on the election cry of "Chinese Slavery".

Following the close of the War in South Africa there had been a shortage of native labour for the Rand gold mines : and the grave mistake was made of recruiting Chinese coolie labour instead of taking the opportunity to encourage the migration of British mining

workers, and thus strengthening the British race position in South Africa. It was mistaken policy, and condemnable. But the statements by which the British electors were fooled, that these Chinese were "slaves" was an impudent falsehood. Like the Chinese labourers who were recruited during the World War to work behind the British lines in France, they were eager volunteers, happy at the chance of highly profitable jobs.

The "dear food" cry of the elections of 1909 and 1910 had just as little relation to fact. A section of the Conservative Party (not the majority of its leaders) favoured a policy of Imperial Preference to encourage the transfer from foreign sources to our Dominions of a portion of our food imports. That policy would not have caused an increase in the cost of food in Great Britain. But to say that it would was "good politics".

I recall one incident of this "dear food" campaign which was as remarkable for its ingenuity as for its shamelessness. Windows in the East End of London—where the ignorance of the electors could be relied upon—were filled with exhibits of the "dreadful black bread" which the Germans were compelled to eat under "the policy of Tariff Reform". This "dreadful

black bread" was pumpernickel, a German luxury bread, which is a treasured item of a festival meal. But its appearance is certainly not appetizing, and these exhibits no doubt had influence in returning to power the Liberal Party in 1909 and in 1910.

The great influence of a good "slogan" in misleading the electors has a negative as well as a positive evil. The managers of the Party political machines find it prudent to avoid any declarations of policy which may be misrepresented so as to make an effective "slogan" for the other side. Thus in 1909 and 1910 there was the best of reasons, in view of the gathering clouds of the coming World War, to give intelligent discussion to Lord Roberts' plan of giving the elements of military training to all young citizens on conditions which would not interfere with their civil vocations. Such discussion was impossible. Prominent members of the Conservative Party have admitted to me that they fully believed in the plan, but that it was impossible to confess their belief, as "the Radicals would call it Conscription".

The General Election of 1918, following closely upon the Armistice, was fought upon the election cries of "Hang the Kaiser", "Make Germany Pay", and "Homes for Heroes"—

the latter phrase representing the promise that, having hanged the Kaiser and made Germany pay the costs of the War, we were to use our abundant wealth to make an earthly paradise for our returned soldiers. At this election the Coalition Government in appealing to the voters might have safely relied on a programme of patriotic reconstruction. The people, grateful at the victorious conclusion of the World War, probably would have gladly followed an honest lead. But honesty, even when it would have been profitable honesty, was impossible to the Party political machines.

Since 1918 there have been efforts (usually half-hearted) to put before the voters real issues, not dishonest catch-cries and offers of bribes, but Mr. Baldwin's experience in 1923 seems to have convinced even him of the futility of this. At his 1929 appeal to the country a typical leaflet of his Party read :

In 1928 the Conservative Government spent £1,000,000 more on education, £3,000,000 more on housing, £1,000,000 more on health services, £13,000,000 more on pensions than the Socialist Government which preceded them. . . . During the lifetime of the present Conservative Government the expenditure on social services by the State and the local authorities has increased by thirty millions.

“£30,000,000 more in bribes” was on the

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face of it, under present conditions, a first-class election "slogan". But, unfortunately for Mr. Baldwin, the other side was offering more, and consequently won.

It is not going beyond the truth to affirm that the 1929 British General Election, with its bribing appeals from all three political parties, brought the Home Centre of the British Empire near to the conditions of the Roman Empire in 193, when the Pretorians put the government up to public auction and, refusing Sulpicianus, who did not offer enough, made Didius Julianus Emperor at the price of £200 per Pretorian. And with universal suffrage there are so many Pretorians to be placated!

To recapitulate: a British Parliament is, at the outset, prevented from representing the best governing capacity of the country by the limitations on the choice of candidates; and the system of election, which has become a system of appeal to the great majority of the voters to help themselves out of the pockets of others, tends to secure the election of the least scrupulous set of candidates.

Let us consider now the working of Parliamentary government in some of the chief departments of national life. •

CHAPTER III

Foreign Affairs

THE relations of a country with its neighbours in the world do not come fully within the purview of the democratic Parliamentary system. The Foreign Office is allowed a great measure of autocratic decision. The facts of diplomatic negotiations are usually kept from the knowledge of the voters, and even such an important decision as that of engaging in a war is taken without any appeal to the people. This recognition that the polyarchical system is not conducive to wise consideration and to sound decision in the most important matters of government is something to be thankful for, but any feeling of security on this point is disturbed by the fact that the oligarchy which manages Foreign Policy is under the ultimate domination of the polyarchy, and comes more and more each year to be tainted by bribing and temporizing politics. Thus, whilst the Foreign Department of the Government of Great Britain comes least under democratic

Parliamentary influence, and—it is not too much to say consequently—is least subject to its evils, yet it must work under conditions of dangerous neglects and rashnesses and bargaining created by the Party politicians.

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During the 1922 General Election, when the Coalition Government had fallen and Mr. Bonar Law was appealing to the voters as leader of a Conservative Government, he had a large measure of sympathy from Lord Grey of Fallodon and some others of the old Liberal Party. One dramatic incident of the contest was the indignant denunciation by Lord Grey of a series of posters being issued by the Central Office of the Conservative Party during that contest, accusing the Liberal Government of 1910-14 of having "let us in for" the World War. The indignation of Lord Grey (one of the few men who has proved superior to the party political system) at this charge, coming from the source it did, was understandable. Nevertheless—without any sympathy for that election "slogan" from Central Office, which was not nimble enough in its wits to recognize that it was no longer a Coalition agency, with

the function to put a Lloyd George gloss on political issues—the tragic truth is that the Liberal Government of 1910-14 *and* the previous Liberal Government *and* the previous Balfour Conservative Government did “let us in for” the cruel tragedy of the World War, in which we sacrificed needlessly many hundreds of thousands of lives and countless treasure by being, from a military point of view, almost wholly unprepared.

The Parliamentary management of British Foreign Policy from 1910 to 1914—all its errors made in spite of expert advice and for motives of political manoeuvring—is in truth a tragic indictment of our system of government. It would undoubtedly have led to the destruction of the Empire but for the Providential intervention which brought against the German Powers almost the whole world. To summarize very briefly the leading facts :

In 1900 it was clear that the German Empire aspired to the hegemony of Europe, and was determined to fight the issue out with Great Britain. With each following year the danger became clearer. The Conservative Government in power after the “Khaki Election” neglected to make adequate military preparation. The Liberal Government which followed

did a little, but nothing adequate. The efforts of Lord Roberts and others to secure some precautionary preparation—even to the extent of obtaining a stock of a million rifles and a thousand field-guns—were derided.

By 1909 the German shipbuilding programme had been fully disclosed, and at the same time the Treaty of Berlin, maintaining the *status quo* in Europe, was torn up by the German Powers. The will to war was nakedly manifest. There was a marked uneasiness in Great Britain, and a general political expression of the view that preparation was necessary.

The General Elections, 1909-10 changed nothing of the world position but, because it changed radically the British Parliamentary position, changed radically the views of the Liberal Government in power as regards the foreign position.

Whilst in 1909, in face of the great danger then clearly disclosed, the British ruling politicians seemed willing to consider defence seriously, in 1910, after a General Election which put the Irish Party in power and gave Party controversies a fresh stimulus, that willingness vanished, the Government attitude set more and more steadily to the theory that anyone who spoke seriously of defence

was a wicked alarmist. Nothing happened in Europe that could be interpreted as trending to peace; indeed, the War warnings accumulated. But the politicians in power (aided and abetted to a great extent by the indifference, or by the Party spirit, of most of the politicians out of power) cried "peace" more and more vociferously each month as they committed the nation to fresh domestic entanglements and dissensions. Is it to be wondered at that Germany calculated confidently that, when the War came, Great Britain would be helpless, absorbed completely in the task of pulling down the national fabric so that every man might be made happy with a half-brick?

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An incident of the unpublished history of that time. The sailors and soldiers could not, with rare exceptions, share the blindness of the politicians, and discussions of the coming peril among them were inevitable. An Imperial officer, who communicated to his government overseas—as it was his clear duty to do—a gravely alarming fact which had come up at one of these discussions, was censured for doing so. The politicians in power insisted

that sailors and soldiers should follow the "ostrich policy". The domestic politics of Great Britain were based on the presumption that there was no foreign danger, and it was "disloyalty" to suggest otherwise.

Further evidence of the dislike of the then British Government towards any enthusiasm for defence preparation was that the Government's Press organs (and one of the guerrilla political organizations supporting the Government) were allowed to campaign against the system of universal training for military service just instituted in Australia and New Zealand. The "conscientious objector" in those Dominions had been treated with a just tolerance; if a man objected to shedding blood in defence of his country he could go into the Ambulance Service and train to staunch blood in defence of his country. Nothing could be fairer. But he was encouraged with money, with pamphlets, and with Press support from one set of politicians in England to carry his objection to the point of seditious resistance to the law. It was inconvenient that, whilst the people at home were being assured that there was no German menace, British people abroad should be preparing to meet that menace.

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When, it being clear that the Party in power would never consent to a training of the manhood of the country for its defence, the appeal was made to them at least to get in a stock of guns and rifles, and to make our munition factories independent of any foreign supplies. That also was refused.

So we were "let in for" 1914 and those agonizing months when it seemed that the German attack would succeed in destroying civilization, because Great Britain, with most of her manhood eager to serve, could not train and arm quickly enough. Now, if the British nation had made adequate preparation in 1909 the World War probably never would have come—even German war lust would have shuddered away from the risks. If it had come, it would probably have been a very short affair, ending within three months.

The responsibility rests with the Liberal politicians and with the Unionist politicians: and most of all with the political system that insisted on diverting the nation's attention to the promotion of petty Party controversies and vetoed any real preparation. Sometimes in the Law Courts a judge, trying a case of theft or embezzlement, feels called upon to remark that the chief wrong-doer is an employer who paid

starvation wages and so put an employee to an impossible strain of temptation. On that analogy the chief criminal of the World War was the British political system which offered to the Germans an apparently easy chance of repeating the profitable wars against Denmark, against Austria, and against France in the previous century.

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The working of our Parliamentary system on foreign policy may be further illustrated by the record of the British Government's relations with Russia from the date when they were taken out of the hands of the professional diplomats and were conducted with political motives. That some encouragement was given to the "Liberal Revolution" in Russia by the British Government from motives of political sympathy is, I think, admitted; it is at least the impression which the published records give. If so, it were a grievous fault. The Tsarist Government, inefficient, unfortunate, was at any rate loyal; until the War was over, it was to the highest degree dangerous, apart from any question of good faith, to countenance any movement which questioned its authority.

A political mistake about which there is no

doubt—and a most mischievous mistake—was the armed intervention against the subsequent Bolshevik Revolution. There is no principle of statecraft more clear than that foreign intervention establishes a revolution. The most bigoted Tory in England, if he were under the harrow of, say, a Maxton regime and Monaco intervened with armed force, would forget that he was anti-Maxtonite and remember only that he was British. The Bolshevik madness might have run a short course in Russia if it had not been able to rally to its help a national feeling because of foreign armed intervention.

Subsequently to 1919 the sound attitude of the British Government to the Bolshevik Government of Russia would have been that of armed neutrality, with condign punishment of any Bolshevik agents caught within our territories. Political considerations vetoed such a sound and dignified policy. Mr. Lloyd George had apocalyptic visions of the overflowing granaries of Russia—actually a famine-stricken land. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, Mr. Snowden, Mr. Lansbury, and other leaders of the Socialist Party were held in the net of the Leeds Convention of June, 1917 (they were among its conveners), with its announced purpose “to do for Britain what the Council of

Workmen's and Soldiers' Delegates is doing for Russia". At the time it seemed to these folk that that was the way to power, and they were apparently as ready to seize power then under the Red Flag as they are to-day to hold power under the Union Jack, and to recognize the "inevitability of gradualness" in "doing in" Britain as the Soviet has "done in" Russia. The Conservative leaders alone—it is a rare and refreshing thing to record that at one time, on one issue, one political party took up a sound and dignified position—had given up their previous tolerance of Mr. Lloyd George's attitude.

In 1924 Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, coming into power, formally recognized the Soviet Government, and its agents were established in London to carry on their openly-announced campaign of World Revolution. Further, he sought to let the Bolshevik Government dip its hands into the British Treasury, but that intention was frustrated by his fall from office. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, who is, perhaps, the supreme achievement of the British Parliamentary system, denied (February 23rd, 1929) that Russia was guaranteed a loan. The late Lord Haldane and Mr. Arthur Ponsonby, his colleagues, have testified that a guaranteed loan

was agreed to; and the proposed Treaty, subsequently published, contained an undertaking for the "guarantee of interest and sinking fund of a loan to be issued by the Soviet Government". Mr. Ramsay MacDonald—I repeat that he is the supreme achievement of our Parliamentary system—has a truly political sense of the use of words. To deny that there was a loan, when there was a guarantee of interest and sinking fund on a loan, was the attitude on an important matter of foreign relations of the Prime Minister of Great Britain!

The Russian Soviet emissaries subsequently were kicked out for carrying on in London the work which they never pretended to conceal, the work of compassing the destruction of the British Empire. They were brought back in 1929 when Mr. Ramsay MacDonald returned to power, and have at the present time (1930) the advantage of two centres in London from which to operate with "diplomatic immunity".

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Generally speaking, most persons in a position to judge will agree that since 1918, when the merit of the British people, *not* of their

politicians, had placed them in the forefront of the world, the politicians have very seriously diminished that prestige by inefficiency, insincerity, and the desire to pander to mob passions. The British "Hang-the-Kaiser-Make-Germany-Pay" General Election was tragic in its indignity, grave in its mischief by deflecting the Peace negotiations from a sane economic basis. The subsequent attempts to interfere with the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia—foreign interference rallied the Russians to the defence of a madness which, without that interference, might have come to an early end—and to back up a Greek Empire in Asia Minor were worthy only of a madhouse.

The agreement to bind the British Empire to the war chariot of any Power in Europe clever enough to plan a struggle in which it could claim to be the aggrieved party was certainly not carried to its final stage (partly owing to the protest of the Dominions), but Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, now Prime Minister of Great Britain, consented to it "in the cause of peace" !

I put aside the temptation to recite all the silly, undignified, lazy, dangerous actions with which politicians of all parties have spoiled the reputation of Great Britain; decline even the

temptation of recalling the low comedy of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald during the incident of the Zinovieff Letter, when he showed as fluttered as a shot rabbit in his pathetic anxiety to discover whether there were more votes in being a Palmerston, angrily zealous for his country's pride, or a sturdy apologist for his Bolshevik comrades, injured by the circulation of a forgery. Without going into details, the general thesis can be maintained that, insofar as the democratic political method, with its traditions of corrupt bargaining and of beclouding real issues—with its two blessed words "gesture" and "formula"—has been allowed to obtrude into foreign affairs, it has proved wholly mischievous. If its objective has been "to make the world safe for democracy", it has mostly succeeded in making it miserably unsafe for human beings wishing to lead quiet, dignified lives.

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The reactions of our political system on relations with India and Egypt have become apparent lately. The troubles with both those countries have the one common cause, the promotion of "Parliamentarism".

So much fudge is talked in carrying on government by humbugging appeals to mob

prejudices, that the plain truth about the logic of the relations of a Western civilized Power with a coloured "subject race" may have an air of uncouthness, but should be stated. In plain English, we are in India and in Egypt because, under the conditions of world development to-day, we are the "superior" people; and it is nonsense to attempt to stay there without acting on that postulate. As to whether in a universal sense we are "superior" is not a matter to be debated here. I have sometimes had doubts as to the superiority of the white races, especially in the South Sea Islands twenty years ago among the laughing tribes of happy children there, who have "never grown up", living gracious, courteous lives in their little Edens, free from the curse of Adam. Nor is it of any practical use to inquire whether we went, say, into India in the first instance to "shake the Pagoda Tree" or for the benefit of the Indians. As things are, they are. In India and in Egypt we have undertaken responsibilities and have to carry them out in a practical common-sensible manner: or quit; and it seems clear that to quit would be disastrous not so much to ourselves as to the people who would find themselves without our protection.

The autocratic element of our administration, in recent years at least, both in India and in Egypt, has generally striven for the good of the people under their charge in a spirit of practical common-sense; has recognized that the task is to govern with justice, to promote economic improvement and to make headway against cruel customs. It has thought of the people as wanting bread, not ballot-boxes. But the political element has set itself to educate subject peoples to play the political game. The children of Egyptian fellaheen and Indian ryots have been taught to become "politically minded"; to despise the industry of their fathers; and to believe that they can govern themselves, since the only essential of that is to have a vote.

For the consequences of this folly, so far as it has gone, we are beginning to pay now. But the folly continues, and will continue—for it is the policy of all the political Parties—unless and until the present Parliamentary system is abrogated.

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There is one development in the democratic Parliamentary conduct of a nation's affairs which, at first sight, seems utterly ludicrous,

but on closer examination proves to be a logical, indeed an inevitable, development; viz., the conclusion that the safest course in any grave difficulty is to entrust control to the least patriotic, the most unscrupulously anti-national section of the politicians, on the argument that in Office they will be forced by circumstances into some care for the national dignity, in Opposition they will do their utmost to appeal to popular passion to embarrass national policy.

This remarkable application of the principle that a converted poacher makes the best game-keeper, that the prize of office should be won not by merit but by demerit, may be observed in actual practice at the present time (1930). There could be quoted from the leading articles of the more responsible newspapers and from platform speeches of the more responsible politicians, scores of arguments having the same general trend: that during the serious crisis in India it is desirable, nay necessary, to keep the Socialist Party in Office because if they were in Opposition they would surely do their utmost to embarrass, by misrepresentation in Parliament and popular agitation outside Parliament, any steps to safeguard law and order.

These arguments are based on facts, how-

ever dangerous and disreputable one may consider the conclusion drawn from the facts. During the life of the last Conservative Government a grave situation developed in China. It was necessary to take steps to defend the lives and property of British subjects in Shanghai. The Socialist Opposition screamed with rage; did its utmost to prevent these defence steps and to leave our people in China to the tender mercies of the Chinese mob acting under Bolshevik influence. One member of the Labour Party, who dared to defend the national honour, was drummed out of the Party, and, appealing to his constituency, was drummed out of Parliament. There is not much doubt that if the Socialist Party were in Opposition in 1930 all its power would be devoted to supporting the Indian seditionists, and we should probably be faced with threats of general strikes and Direct Action to hamstring the necessary steps to keep law and order in India.

In the Courts of Justice there is no crime more reprobated than blackmail. The miscreant who threatens: "Give me money or I shall try to bring you to ruin" is treated with a just severity. In democratic politics exactly the opposite principle is applied. A Party

may, and does in effect, declare : " Give us Office or in Foreign Affairs we shall do our utmost to bring the country to ruin." The answer is to give them Office and to hope that the poacher appointed gamekeeper will prove to be a genuinely converted character.

It is a desperate and despicable basis for national policy ; nor can there be claimed for it any sound security. The obvious development is for some other political section to harass a Socialist government in its duty, as that party in Opposition would have harassed a Conservative or a Liberal administration ; and we may yet come to the stage when the logical course—under the meek acceptance of blackmail policy—will be to install a Communist Party as the guardian of the Kingdom's honour and security.

Better surely to put it out of the power of political sects to use the polyarchical system for the ruin of the Empire !

China, by the way, is a classic example of the evils following upon the "propaganda" of our polyarchical system.

In an old melodrama by Henry Arthur

Jones, the "Silver King", wrongly believing that he has committed a crime, prays to God "to put back the hands of Time and give him back yesterday". The Parliamentary democracies might well utter the same vain prayer to-day in looking towards the troubled Far East. They—with the United States of America taking a leading part—insisted on educating China in their system. To-day, facing the consequences, they must devoutly wish they had left these people undisturbed. The misfortune of success has never been better exemplified than in the results which have followed.

Chinese republicanism dates back only a few years. It was not due to the sufferings of the Chinese people under a harsh tyranny, but to the education of a group of Chinese "intellectuals" into the belief that with Parliamentary government would come progress on the Western model. To quote one of the most notable of these :

None of the dynasties in China has ever maintained a tyrannical regime for any length of time, least of all the Manchu dynasty, the policy of which has consisted rather of a mixture of paternalism and obscurantism than of hard repression of the people. . . . The present desire of the Chinese to remove the Manchu dynasty arises solely from the fact that

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the Chinese have fully awakened to the realization that only a policy of thorough-going Westernization can save China from disruption and partition. The removal of the Manchu dynasty is of no greater national moment to China than would be the fall of a Cabinet to any European country. Chinese Republicanism will be of a much more strongly democratic type than any known in Europe. It will even be more popular in its constitution than the American, and will far more fully seek the development of the common weal than most bureaucratic systems bearing the name. The suggested application of Christian principles to the new regime may be regarded as wholly impossible. Confucianism, by which China stands or falls, is a secular philosophy, the only semblance of a spiritual or religious tenet in which is the principle of ancestor-worship, and though a theocratic idea is admitted in the creation of the universe, the question of a life hereafter is wholly excluded from its teachings.

Well, China won Parliamentary institutions. The results can be seen.

CHAPTER IV

The Land

THE management of the nation's estate should be the first interest of a nation's government. Agriculture is the key industry of every people. A nation which neglects to dig its garden is not in a wholesome state, whatever its success in other activities. On the test alone of its record regarding agriculture, British Parliamentary Government can be clearly convicted of the grossest stupidity. For three-quarters of a century government maladministration has operated to kill the farming industry in Great Britain: and all political parties, without exception, share in the blame.

In 1851 England employed 1,625,000 people on the land. By the beginning of this century the number had fallen to less than a million. During the War years the threat of actual starvation compelled, and the suspension for the time being of the ordinary routine of Parliamentary administration allowed, a temporary change for the better. The War ended and

the Parliamentary system restored, the decline began again. In a decade the area under the plough decreased by two and a half million acres. The decline continues. This year there will be probably a decrease in the number employed on the land, as compared with 1851, of nearly one million workers. (And there are over two millions of other occupations unemployed !)

The decline of British agriculture began with the Industrial era, during which the land was rapidly supplanted by the factory as a money-spinner ; its workers were drained away by the attractions of the cities ; its products lost all their protection and had to compete with foreign goods on terms of disadvantage, but its burdens were left. All things that could help it through the crisis of the new era—technical education, market organization, cheap credit, cheap transport—were neglected ; and, most mischievous of all, the idea was allowed to grow up of the agricultural estate not as a legitimate source of wealth but as a luxury apanage to a great house.

The "land question" became so mixed up with Party politics that it was quite impossible to get it considered reasonably in the light of an economic question. The sort of way in

which it *was* regarded may be illustrated by this quotation of a song which I heard chanted, with all due solemnity, at a public meeting on the land question held by a prominent Minister of the Crown in an English Midland town in 1910 :

When wilt Thou save the people?
O God of Mercy! When?
The people, Lord, the people,
Not thrones and crowns, but men.
God save the people; Thine they are,
Thy children, as Thy angels fair;
Save them from bondage and despair!
God save the people!

When the landlords tried to trample on the poor,
When the hungry man was cursed
For the crust he humbly craved,
As he staggered to the open workhouse door.

Let who will against our liberties conspire,
Strong are arms and hearts and we shall never tire;
We will overwhelm them all with vengeance dire
As we go marching on.

Too long has grim Monopoly
Opposed our sacred cause;
Too long, too long we've borne the yoke
Of its enslaving laws.
Confiding in our champions,
We'll lay the menace low,
Nor stay our hands till we've dispersed
The craven Tory foe!

On such nonsense are Parliaments elected! The British Governments of the Parliaments from 1909 to 1914, when the increase of home production of food was one of the vital issues of national defence, turned for guidance to that battle hymn of Mr. Lloyd George's Land Campaign and his "People's Budget".

It will not be straining my argument to recall that during that Land Campaign, when Mr. Lloyd George and his associates were courting the votes of the people, one of the few practical and honest agricultural experts of England, Mr. Prothero (now Lord Ernle), for venturing to contradict some of that lively demagogue's nonsense, was publicly stigmatized as "a Duke's flunkey". Later, in the War years when Mr. Lloyd George was practically a dictator and electioneering was for the time being in abeyance, he selected the same "Duke's flunkey" to be his Minister of Agriculture and to direct the effort to increase home food production to save the country from famine. The point is that even a professional politician—by calling the most unsuitable of all persons to be entrusted with the task of wise government—can show gleams of practical common-sense when relieved of the necessity of wooing the voters.

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For the decline and fall of British agriculture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the responsibility rests almost entirely with the system of Parliamentary government. The soil and climate of Great Britain did not change : there was no sudden loss of agricultural skill by the people, for the same farmers and workers who were driven off the land of England by bad politics founded successful farming industries in other lands. Admitted that the coming of the industrial era raised serious problems for agriculture : none were insoluble given wise national administration. What was an insoluble problem was to carry a great industry through a period of difficulty subject to the interference and neglect of successive Governments deriving their authority from appeals to voters based on falsehoods, some merely silly, some actively malignant.

Those falsehoods are still arbiters of the issue. The "Dear Food" cry is raised to this day by Socialist, Liberal, and very many Conservative politicians to thwart any sound scheme to bring British land back to culture. The majority of those who raise the cry do so not because they believe it to represent the truth, but because it is "good politics" ; for it is impossible to believe that any intelligent man

does not recognize that England took the wrong turning, with disastrous results to national comfort and national prosperity, when in the Free Trade era it funk'd the problems of raising home food production to meet as much as possible of the growing demands of the industrial population, and based its future on imported foods. The other, wiser policy would have had its difficulties; might have checked to some extent the rapid growth (the too rapid growth, I believe) of mill and factory; would have necessitated some modifications of national food habits, but it would have been a wiser policy. To-day, Free Trade's legacy to the British people is the dearest and the worst food in Western Europe.

The method of undoing that mischief has been clear enough for many years, and is indicated by the fact that wherever in our kingdom local production of food has best survived, there the standard of economy and comfort in food is highest. Our people have to be educated back to the principle—which is to-day the principle of every other land—of the local production of as much as possible of the food requirements of a population; of the shaping of the food habits of a locality to meet as far as possible its local possibilities of food

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production ; and of importation as the last resource. To-day importation is regarded as almost a sacred principle, and one finds on hotel tables inferior foreign cheeses in a district which can produce the very finest cheeses, and tinned "fruit salad" served in sight of trees laden with fresh fruit.

I repeat that it is impossible to assume that the politicians of any party are generally so stupid as not to recognize the facts. My personal knowledge (which is a fairly wide one and not restricted to any one party) of them contradicts that assumption. But they are the bound slaves of the system of Parliamentary government, under which a successful catch-cry becomes like a morphia habit, something almost impossible to drop.

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On this point of the disastrous effects of the Parliamentary system of government on the land policy of a nation, it will be useful to call evidence outside of Great Britain (where at least the political muddlers can have the shadow of an excuse, that they have had to deal with a real difficulty arising out of the coming of the industrial epoch). Consider the mess which was made of the land question in Australia,

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where there was no such difficulty, as soon as its control was taken over by a set of Parliaments.

Starting with a clean sheet and 2,974,581 square miles of land, at least half of it useable in some form, Australia, after some eighty years of democratic government, and with a population of less than six million people, is to-day in the position that there is an unsatisfied local demand for land for farming; and a refusal to encourage immigration because "there is no land available for settlers". Throughout those eighty years the system of government has been democratic (of late based upon universal adult suffrage), and the cry has been "the land for the people". Never has there been an hereditary territorial aristocracy. Yet to-day the position is so far from being accounted satisfactory that there is in every State a land question, which seems to need an almost annual Land Act, and the central Commonwealth Government has interfered over the heads of the States to open up further "the land for the people" by penal taxation.

Follow the chief stages of this progress of a land system from a clean sheet to a sad muddle, in a democratic community, within a very short period of time (for convenience sake,

the facts are taken from one State only, New South Wales). In the early days land was allotted by grants and orders from the Governor. Usually the grants were subject to a small quit-rent and were conditional upon a proportion of the land being cultivated, or upon certain services being performed. In 1842 the system was revised. Lands were to be surveyed before being put up for sale. It was provided that, subject to a primary charge for survey, half the proceeds of sales were to go to defray the cost of immigration. Leases were granted for various terms for pastoral purposes only. During the currency of these leases the lessee could at any time purchase the freehold at the upset price of £1 an acre, and on the expiration of the term he had a pre-emptive right at the same price over all or any part of the land.

That was the end of the "despotic" era of regulating land conditions in New South Wales. In 1855 responsible government was granted, and the colonists were left to manage their own land affairs. The land system the New South Wales democracy took over was, on the whole, fairly reasonable. The free grants made to ex-convicts, ex-soldiers, and Government officials had been its one evil, for these grants—often of areas which were subsequently

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to be the environs of great cities—were sometimes inspired by very little meritorious service. But there had been some check on the creation of too large estates, and a finger had been pointed in the right direction of development by a classification system. Most important of all for the new community, only a small fraction of the land had been alienated. By 1859, which was four years after responsible government, the total area of land sold or granted in New South Wales was only 6,846,773 acres out of 198,638,080 acres. The young democracy had thus over 190,000,000 acres to deal with.

Now came a "popular" land movement, and the cry of "the land for the people" was raised by politicians and found an eager response from the voters. The position of New South Wales—a position typical of that of Australia—then was this: the gold discoveries had caused a great influx of population (it rose from 189,000 in 1846 to 889,000 in 1861), but it was already clear to the more intelligent of the colonists that the future of the country rested not on its fate as a mining camp, but on its pastoral and agricultural possibilities. The pastoral industry, in particular, showed boundless prospects of wealth. (By 1860 New South Wales had

251,000 horses, 2,408,000 cattle, and 6,119,000 sheep.)

The wise land policy was clearly to encourage this pastoral industry in the first place. It was the staple industry of the country; the proved steady gold-spinner. At the time it was suffering a little embarrassment from the tremendous increase in the price of labour, caused by the gold rushes. But there could be no doubt that for the term of some generations the prosperity of the country would be linked up with the prosperity of the pastoralist.

There was a second interest to be considered by the framers of a land policy for Australia—that of the agriculturists. The early wails of the first settlers as to the impossibility of growing grain and fruit had already been disproved. To the later agriculturists, who had learned how to use the country, there was nothing in the average of conditions to alarm. In an occasional dry year they found that they would get poor crops. In an occasional very good year they would get extraordinary crops. In the usual fair year they would get better crops with less trouble than in almost any other part of the world. There was good, well-watered land, upon which the rain came regularly, sufficient to maintain an agricultural population

of many millions ; and, after that, apart from a large tract of poorly-watered country in the far interior, there was an immense area which was steadily profitable with special treatment.

First to encourage the pastoralist, then to encourage the farmer—that was clearly the wise land policy for Australia. With such a vast area to dispose of, it was easy to serve the needs of both. But wise precaution would have suggested that, since the conditions of life for the farmer were in many ways different to the conditions for the pastoralist, some grading of country, not only by its comparative fertility but by its means of access to ports and cities, was necessary. The pastoralist, depending to a very great extent on nomadic labour, able to send some of his products to market on their own hoofs and the rest of his products in small bulk, could range far. The farmer, to whom life as a solitary dweller away from centres of population was more irksome and less likely to be profitable, should be kept near the ports and centres of population.

One can see now how easily the “land for the people” could have become an achieved ideal in Australia if common-sense had ruled, and the voice of the demagogue, crying out for votes and refusing to be comforted with any

counsels of wisdom, had been silent. The "back country", remote from the coast, somewhat harsh in climate, economically the most profitable if its wealth were gathered in with the least expenditure possible of population, since the more population the more need of schools, courts, post offices, and other apparatus of civilization (very expensive in scattered settlements)—this back country would have been left to the sheep-man and the cattle-man on lease with good security of tenure. Then agricultural population would have been gradually spread out from the coast, a rich valley or tableland here and there settled, and settled thickly, before a move forward was made to another area.

Clearly that was the desirable system ; as clearly then as now ; for it is no discovery of to-day that the back country of Australia is peculiarly well suited for sheep and cattle, and will get the best of national profits out of them ; that farmers do best on well-watered rich lands near to cities and seaports ; that if you scatter ten thousand farmers thinly over a vast area, separating them one from another, and from the cities by long and expensive journeys, you make them less comfortable than if they were concentrated, and you make the business of

supplying them with some of the comforts of civilization far more arduous and expensive.

But—the voice of the quack was heard. Following the sentimental outcry of “the land for the people”, the land system of New South Wales was set in the wrong path. To quote a cautious and reserved official summary (from the Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia) of New South Wales land legislation since Responsible Government, before giving my own observations of that legislation in the working :

The public interest in the question which thus arose resulted in the passing of the Crown Lands Acts of 1861, under the leadership of Mr. John Robertson. The object of these Acts was to facilitate the establishment of an agrarian population, side by side with the pastoral tenants. . . .

With many benefits there was also considerable mischief as a result of the operation of Robertson's Act, chiefly for the reason that land being held under pastoral leases not exempt from free selection could be the subject of speculative selecting without *bona-fide* intention of settlement.

That gives the bare bones of the story. Anyone with a knowledge of New South Wales conditions can put on the flesh, to show as painful a picture as ever had to be painted of the results of political quackery. The position

in 1861, as I have pointed out, called for the opening up of some agricultural areas. If to secure that end the dispossession of a few pastoralists was necessary, that might have been easily effected with little or no disturbances of general conditions. There were ample other lands to offer as leaseholds to the dispossessed.

But, alas, there was no great political campaign possible on the basis of arranging good areas for 5,000 to 10,000 farmers. There was, however, fine politics in a raging, tearing denunciation of the pastoralist as a tyrant, a despoiler of the widow and the orphan, an oppressor of the poor, a monopolist of the land, a villain without rights and outside the law, akin to the villain of the later "Land Song" of England. The pastoralists were few in number. They were as a class the most capable and courageous of the community—it needed both courage and capacity to carve a sheep-run or a cattle-run out of the wilderness—and therefore they were not the most popular. (It is the option which faces us all, I suspect, in old as well as new communities, to be good-tempered, easy-going, and popular, or to do things and arouse antagonism.) In a whirlwind of popular passion, the Land Acts of 1861 were passed, and the people had the land opened to them.

In a very complete sense they now had the land, these people of New South Wales. There were over 190,000,000 acres, a proportion of it held on lease and occupied and equipped with fences, water-dams, houses, and offices by the hated pastoralists. It was all for the people, the sovereign people, with the exception of a very small freehold area. Anyone of the sovereign people might go anywhere and "free select"—with what proud sovereignty!—up to 320 acres of the land that he wanted. There were some conditions, certainly: the payment of a deposit to the Government, the payment of instalments afterwards until £1 an acre had been paid; and dwelling conditions, too, which were designed to confine free selection to those of the sovereign people genuinely anxious to till the soil. But those conditions had little practical efficacy to prevent mischief.

It did not take some people long to discover what power of robbery and destruction a mischievous and unthinking demagoguery had put in their hands. Australia is a country of rare water-courses and over the greater part of its area some artificial conservation of water is necessary. What more simple than for the free selector to find that he wanted 320 acres just where it would take up the whole water frontage

of a pastoral lease of many thousands of acres? The pastoralist, faced with the prospect of ruin, saved his skin in many cases by paying out blackmail. The free selector remained on his "farm" to fulfil the conditions of settlement, but the farm was really the property of the pastoralist who paid large sums to the selector, who was his "dummy".

It was not long before, in one aspect, "free-selecting" settled down to a regular and highly profitable branch of criminality, which put burglary in the shade and eclipsed all the profits of robbery-under-arms. A wise pastoralist did not wait until a selector came to "pick the eyes out of his run". He engaged his own free selectors—"dummies" they were called—who selected farms on his run, remained on them sufficiently long to observe the conditions, and then sold them as freeholds to him. Chicanery, conspiracy, perjury, murder even, can be found in the veracious records of those days, which the official recorder I have quoted summarizes as "considerable mischief". The net result, when accounts could be squared up, roughly was this :

The leasehold pastoral areas had been in many cases converted to freeholds by the buying out of "dummy" selectors.

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Many millions of pounds had been spent in this process, the money going in the main to lawyers, conspirators and perjurers. The State got no advantage, as it sold at sacrifice rates land for which it had been getting good rents. In very many cases the pastoralists were ruined by the load of debt they had incurred to fight "free selectors" by "dummying" and the runs passed into the control of banks and other money-lending institutions.

Farming settlement, instead of being concentrated for the time in a few areas, was sprinkled all over the vast extent of the State, and the government was faced with the task of finding railways, roads, bridges, schools, police patrols, etc. for these scattered settlers. After it had done so, in many cases, the settlers abandoned their holdings.

It was all loss ; and there was no gain which might not have been won by other means. It is a classic example of political quackery in dealing with the land. And it was inevitable, under the conditions of democratic Parliamentary government, whereby the rulers of the nation are chosen by chicanery and claptrap.

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Coming back to British land conditions, since the beginning of the present century it has been clear that the agricultural industry of the United Kingdom is perishing ; and there has been no doubt in reasonable minds as to the causes of

the disease, and the means of cure. Equally clear is it that under our Parliamentary system of government the cure will never be applied. Liberals, Conservatives, Socialists have all proved helpless. A re-colonization of England would provide happy livelihoods for another million of workers and give the people cheaper and more wholesome food. It cannot be attempted; the "dear food" falsehood governs the ballot-boxes.

CHAPTER V

National Finance

CONSIDERED theoretically, the administration of a nation's finances under a democratic Parliamentary system must be bad ; and could only be good on the presumptions that the great majority of the community were wise in understanding financial questions and honest in leaving out of consideration their own personal gain ; and that the candidates asking for their votes resisted all temptation to appeal to selfish considerations. These two presumptions not being credible, the trend of such administration can be calculated in theory without much difficulty : the many will seek to place as much of the financial burden as possible on the few, and will encourage extravagance from which they expect direct benefit.

In practice this calculation is proved sound. There is everywhere in democratic communities a trend to limit the number of taxpayers and to increase the expenditure from taxes.*

The financial administration of the British

nation under the Parliamentary system of government can well be illustrated by a brief review of the Budgets from 1920 to 1930, with some reference to War finance.

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In 1920 Mr. (now Sir) Austen Chamberlain opened his Budget to the House of Commons with every appearance of pride. He expressed no apology for the fact that his expenditure in the previous year had exceeded his Estimates by the sum of £144,000,000; but he took obvious pleasure in the fact that his Estimates of receipts had been exceeded by £138,500,000. He did not show that there had entered into his mind the slightest suspicion that there was any relation between those two figures. To any but the political mind the suggestion was obvious that, with proof that the bleeding of the taxpayer was going to bring in £138,500,000 more than had been anticipated, there was a corresponding resolve to spend this amount (and a little more for luck). Without the £138,500,000 extra revenue, the £144,000,000 additional expenditure could not have been wasted, because at that time further borrowing was practically impossible. But the money

being made available, why not squander it?

There was no hint of apology for spending £144,000,000 more than had been anticipated, and spending a total of £1,579,000,000 in a year of peace. But there was announcement of a proud resolution to enter in real earnest upon the task of paying something off the debt of £7,855,000,000. Was this to be effected by drastic economy? Not a word on that point. Reduction of debt was to come from fresh taxation. The taxes for the year 1920-21 would, on the already wildly inflated basis, provide £1,341,650,000 of revenue. They must be increased in the cause of debt redemption. Mr. Chamberlain indicated increases equal in a full year to a further yield of £198,230,000. Increases in Customs and Excise and new motor taxes were to bring in £63,700,000; new stamp duties, £6,300,000; an increase in the Excess Profits Duty, £100,000,000; a new Corporation Profits Tax, £35,000,000; new postal, telegraph, and telephone charges, £9,500,000. Every source of the nation's producing capacity was tapped, really to finance a continuance and extension of the programme of monstrous waste, but with the promise (which, of course, was not

realized) that there would be made available £234,000,000 for the reduction of the National Debt.

“Twenty such Budgets,” exclaimed Mr. Austen Chamberlain, “would redeem the whole of our debt!” Since that declaration—the pompous fatuity of which would be difficult to match even in British records of democratic finance—there have been eleven “such Budgets”, interpreting “such” in the sense of taking from the taxpayer every possible shilling, so to-day we should be rejoicing, if Mr. Chamberlain had been correct, in a National Debt reduced by more than a half. But it is still seven and a half thousand millions. The actual figure reduction from 1920 to 1930 has been £386,000,000 in ten years, though Mr. Chamberlain promised a reduction of £234,000,000 in *one* year.

If we go beyond consideration of the figures in pounds sterling, and look at the debt burden in terms of *gold* value, the position is even graver. Accepting as a sound authority *The Times* (April 20th, 1920), “the real value of the pound sterling has dropped since the War to about eight shillings”, and making a liberal allowance in favour of a more optimistic calculation than that, the true position is

that the *real* debt burden has been greatly increased.

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The policy of heavy taxation during the War was sound, and until Mr. McKenna left the Treasury it was generally sound in method. Subsequently it became by successive stages more and more frenzied, and its effect was to cause all commodity prices to soar to wildly extravagant levels, when the Government was necessarily the chief purchaser of commodities and was a huge purchaser not only for our own nation but for allied nations. The cost of the War was doubled by that taxation policy, its failure to tap effectively the real "profiteers", and its encouragement of extravagance.

But passing from the War years—the nation was in a desperate plight, and there is some excuse for the politicians being rattled—and concentrating on the years from 1920 to 1930, what a dismal record of incompetence and of dishonesty! The British people had come through the harshest of trials, and had won to safety at the price of sacrifices of life and treasure which brought them face to face with the position of having little or nothing left but the opportunity, by industry and economy, to

build up anew. But they had an Empire containing a full quarter of the whole world's natural resources at their disposal, and with sound finance would have been out of their difficulties by now.

Instead they were led—to use a figure of speech borrowed from “fast life”—to imitate the lady who, faced by difficult circumstances, takes “the easiest way”. There was a hard, high road, but an uphill one, a road of toilsome effort, of resolute economy. How much more attractive to turn back from that road to “the easiest way”.

The politicians had had the idea during the War that the only way to persuade the British people to fight it out was to fill them up with sloshy nonsense about the paradise that was to be theirs for the asking as soon as the German threw in his hand. Of course, the real truth was that we were faced with the task of fighting for our lives, and were lucky to come out with so much as shirts on our backs. I believe the British people were quite strong enough, in soul and in mind, to have faced that truth from the first, and to have acted accordingly; that they did not need to be bribed to do their duty with promise of front stalls for an earthly paradise.

But the politicians thought differently. The

things that were promised to the people of this country "when they won the War" could not have been ever delivered if all the fairy god-mothers in the unseen Universe had been kept working twenty-four hours a day as common carriers. And after the War the cruellest, shabbiest confidence trick was played on a decent people—the talk of making Germany pay the whole cost of the War; the various schemes by which everybody was to work less and get more.

The immediate post-War British General Election, fought on the cant cries of "We'll Hang the Kaiser" and "We'll Make Germany Pay the Whole Cost of the War", was the first inspiration of the disastrous economic absurdities of the Treaty of Versailles, which checked for years the chances of a recovery in Europe. The French advanced—and with truth if not with generosity—in answer to all subsequent representations by Great Britain of the evil results of trying to smash Germany financially, that this policy had its original foundation in our country at that 1919 General Election. Clearly, when the War ended, the British interest was to get Europe and the world back to normal conditions again as soon as possible, and to impose financial conditions on Germany which were within the

bounds of her capacity to pay. That British interest could not be championed at Versailles : our hands were tied by the madness of the 1919 Election promises.

Then it was necessary at home as well as abroad to act as if there had been some reasonable basis for those promises. The British Parliament elected in their clamour was, in a way, forced to act on the presumption that we had made a fortune out of the War and that the great business was to arrange how best to scatter it in doles and bribes.

The winding up of the War munitions departments was marked by a saturnalia of waste which was simply maniacal. Some incidents : Aeroplane manufacture was continued and the planes burned as soon as they left the factory. A superfluous aerodrome was destroyed at some expense and then £250,000 spent in rebuilding it on the same site, as it was found to be, after all, necessary. Cordite production in Canadian factories was carried on and the cordite shipped across the Atlantic to Scotland, carried by rail thence to Woburn Sands (a little north of London), and *there* burned ; it did not occur to our Government that if delivery had to be accepted, the cordite at least might be burned in Canada !

To finance post-War waste, War taxation was continued to the full extent (and in Mr. Chamberlain's 1920 Budget increased). The burden of income-tax, super-tax, and insurance against death duties on a very great estate was 17s. 9d. in the £! What remained of the old inherited accumulations of wealth was thus quickly confiscated; and an immediate result was a steep decline in the agricultural industry—an industry which for half a century had been largely kept in existence by the bounties of the great landlords and which showed the effects when these bounties had to be curtailed or altogether withdrawn. If this money flowing into the Treasury had been used to reduce the War Debt there would have been some exculpation for that confiscation. But it was used to finance a policy of pauperizing the people and of Government waste. To-day but a small remnant remains of the ancestral fortunes of Great Britain; the houses which they maintained, the fields which they kept in cultivation, rapidly pass out of use; and there is nothing to show for the sacrifice but a national morale deteriorated by doles. The rich have been robbed not for the benefit of the poor but for the destruction of their character; and thus the poor were robbed even more cruelly than the rich.

The effect of the 1920 Budget was to hasten on a grave industrial crisis. The money which should have been left with industry to finance its reorganization under the new world conditions was being gathered in by the tax collector and used largely to subsidize laziness and to keep useless Government officials. Succeeding Budgets were less grandiose in their squandermania because of the sheer impossibility of gathering in such vast sums ; but their exactions were always raised to the highest effective limit of leechery ; and much of what they produced was always used in the same fashion, not for reproductive enterprise but for doles—subsidies on wages, on houses, on bread, on games.

The Coalition Government of the Rosy Dawn Finance having come to an inglorious end, there followed a Conservative Government under the late Mr. Bonar Law, which showed an inclination to cry a halt to the Rake's Progress. The next administration was headed by Mr. Baldwin, and he also attempted to take a path which offered some hope of a sound policy, aiming to form a national Government which would bring Mr. McKenna back to the Treasury and Lord Grey of Fallodon to the Foreign Office. But the Parliamentary system was too strong for him. The efforts of Mr. Bonar Law and of

Mr. Baldwin (both honest men of good intentions) in 1922 and 1923 to restore sanity to the administration of the nation's finances may be claimed by defenders of the Parliamentary faith as proof that it is possible under that system for honest and prudent leaders to win to power. Allowing the claim, the final result—the complete failure of Mr. Baldwin—must be accepted as proof that the Parliamentary system effectively corrupts honest purpose.

There is at the present day in England an effort to secure for the Conservative Party "one more chance"; and to build up the hope that, with "one more chance", it will really set itself with honesty and vigour to the task—the desperately difficult task—of arresting the policy of pauperization and of destroying the national wealth. It will require a great effort of faith.

Mr. Baldwin—a remarkable figure in political history—actually made two efforts to tread the path of honesty. After he had been disappointed of the hopes of forming a strong national administration, he appeared to recognize whither the policy of drift was leading, and in 1923 had the courage to appeal to the electors for authority to apply his remedy for the country's industrial and financial troubles—a policy of Protection. Naturally the two other political

parties—though there is strong evidence that *both* of them had been on the verge of the same decision—took the occasion to represent that this policy meant dear food and destitution ; for that is the way of the Parliamentary system. The electors refused to Mr. Baldwin the authority he asked, and he showed how quickly politics can sap honesty by coming back from the polls to announce that he had been wrong, and to abandon what a month before he had advocated as the one essential policy. This action was forced upon him by the Party machine ; for that is the way of Party machines, considering not the good of the country but on what “cry” an Election can be won. So the gentleman, who had inspired high hopes in the nation and who by personal character was fitted to rescue Parliamentary government from the morass of dishonesty and bribery (if that were a possible task), said farewell to consistency, and dropped into line with the political ruck. He had tried to be a patriot and was content to remain a politician.

That was not unusual. Many people have personal knowledge of honest men “going into politics” and the consequent change in their ideas of right and wrong.

After a brief interlude of Socialist Govern-

ment—their remedy for the grave financial difficulties, now thickening, was to extend the dole system to aliens and to lend money to Russia—Mr. Baldwin came back to office on a wave of electoral anger at the Socialist Government's relations with the revolutionary, repudiationist Russian Soviet. He showed his complete conversion to the political as opposed to the patriotic conception of a Prime Minister's duties by appointing Mr. Winston Churchill to the Treasury. Mr. Churchill's qualification for the task was complete mastery of the oratory which sways the Parliament mob; and this outweighed the fact that he had failed in all the tasks of administration previously confided to him.

From 1924 to 1929 the financial administration of Great Britain made rapid progress on the road to ruin. The electors—not by any wisdom on their part nor as the response to any intelligent appeal, but by a mere providential chance of being enraged by a clever Press use of the famous Zinovieff letter (which was as much, or as little, important as any of the other seditious revolutionary documents issuing from the Soviet Roneo machines in a weekly flood)—had entrusted to the Baldwin Government complete power. There was no obstacle to a

policy of full national regeneration. But, as if the deliberate purpose were to prove the impossibility of the Parliamentary system providing good government, the result was an aggravation of every evil tendency.

As a first "sensation" in finance the gold standard was restored. This was announced in a brilliant speech ; and clearly it was considered to be all that was necessary. No thought was given to the relation of the action to the National Debt (much of which had been loaned when the pound sterling was worth half its value in gold) ; nor to its effects on our export industries ; nor to the rigid Government economy which should have accompanied it ; nor to the revision of wages and price rates which should have been its immediate sequel ; nor to the necessity of controlling foreign luxury imports so as to protect the country's balance of trade. It was as if Omnipotence had said : " Let there be the Gold Standard ; and there was the Gold Standard."

The effects of the return to the Gold Standard—without any accompanying measures of economy or of readjustment—were felt at once by the export industries. The workers in the coal industry threatened trouble. They were bought off with a subsidy of £21,000,000.

When that was spent the trouble came—no trouble in the world's history was ever satisfactorily settled with a bribe. The other export industries, cotton, wool, engineering, suffered even more severely than coal. If they had been powerful enough politically, doubtless they would have also exacted subsidies.

The Conservative Government, after nearly five years of absolute power, left the nation's finances in a definitely worse position than when it took office. It had largely reduced the number of taxpayers by exempting a great number of voters from all direct taxation, at the same time as it had vastly increased the number of voters by extending the franchise; thus it widened, far more seriously than any previous Government, the breach between taxation and representation, and established more certainly that the basis of future appeals to the voters would be on the principle of bribing the poor from the robbery of the rich. That it was not acting blindly in this is proved by its powerful appeal on going to the polls that it had sanctioned the expenditure of £30,000,000 a year more on "social services" than the previous Socialist administration. Further, its financial administration had been strained by expedients of anticipating future revenue and

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Progressively the State has been called upon to bear more and more of the financial burden, either by increases of its direct contributions or by grants, usually disguised as loans ; and the conditions for drawing benefit have been modified until practically all precaution has disappeared against the idle using the Unemployment Insurance Fund as a means of avoiding the quest for work. It is no longer an Insurance Fund, but a Government charity.

A good system would have had insurance schemes for the various industries and would have kept their administration in those industries, with rates of contribution and benefit varying with the wages paid. The political objection to that was that it would not have given the opportunity to disguise the dry-rot in certain industries the position of which was being rendered hopeless by national maladministration. An "all-in" system allowed prospering industries to be levied upon for depressed industries, and contributions to be exacted from individuals who would never be in the position to claim benefits. That was charity, compulsory levies for charity, but it was not insurance.

The system has had its natural effect. Nowadays men and women who see idlers living in part on their contributions are tempted

to treat themselves to spells of idleness "on the fund" and give up work for a time. Others use the Health Insurance Fund, and as malingerers live for a term on sick-pay.

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The 1930 Budget has raised the direct taxation on great accumulations of wealth to a degree which is completely confiscatory. Presuming an estate worth £1,000,000 and earning a full five per cent on that amount ; income-tax and sur-tax claim 12s. in the £ of the current revenue ; insurance to provide for the payment of death duties would, in an average case, cost more than the remaining 8s. in the £. A great industrialist, with a million invested in a textile enterprise, an engineering works or a coal mine, or a great landowner with an estate of that value, and drawing £50,000 a year income, would have on an average a debit balance of about £10,000 a year, after providing for these three direct taxes.

The practical effect of this on the small remnants of the British agricultural industry will be disastrous. The farming which is financed by the great landowners—and that is a big proportion—will disappear. I have in my

mind a little fortress against the infestation of the bungalowars and the golfers of London, a rustic village of a hundred lovely cottages, set in gardens, orchards, meadows, copses, and well-tilled fields, within a day's sturdy walk of Marble Arch ; beautiful with that fruitful beauty, becoming so rare in England, of a stretch of land graced by God's gift and man's industry.

The church and its quiet graveyard crown the chief hill of the village. Close by it the dower-house of the great family. Then a school-house and a garland of cottages in faithful brickwork of a good Tudor type, not very old. The present landlord's father built them. Around, pasture fields with contented oxen and horses, perky hens, sly, ogling ducks, stately geese, fussy turkeys ; and the beautiful arable land, brown-red from the plough's painting, or vivid green with the flush of the crop. Everywhere a pleasant, comforting suggestion of food-growing, of the making of the stuff for a young English generation to fatten upon. There is none of this land wasted on a golf-course (and that is good, for when next our land has to battle for its life we cannot eat golfers, though they threaten to become its sole agricultural product) ; but there is a green for cricket and a field for football ; and the many copses, where

beech and elm mingle with wild cherry and deciduous fir, are productive as well as lovely. The little stream in the valley is unspoiled and has its trout.

The patches of bluebells and the primroses are sadly dwindling with each year, for this little paradise is within easy reach of the City ; the kingcups, wild irises, wild daffodils, have almost completely vanished. But the place is still an almost unspoiled corner of the old England ; even a village inn survives which offers good native meat and butter and fruit pies and cream from the orchards and the meadows, but has no American cans in its larder.

The gentle sway of "feudal tyranny" keeps this corner unspoiled. It all belongs to the one man and he has principles. Visitors may come and look hungrily at the lovely cottages and would open their purses to give a pound a week, perhaps even two pounds a week, for such ideal week-end retreats. They must keep their money in their pockets ; the cottages are for the workers on the land, who pay a shilling or two as rent. The fields, now growing grain or roots or pasturing cattle, would offer rich profits to building speculators. They are not at their call, no matter how tempting their offers, though the farmers who till them pay only nominal rents.

So, under the protection of the landlord, this community of a hundred or so families holds its little fortress; and a few square miles of England are preserved from bungalows and golf-courses for their right purpose of nourishing the national life. But this protection is not a cheap matter. I calculate that these hundred families, kept in pleasant cottages and at work in tilling the soil, represent a total loss of a full ten thousand pounds a year, compared with what the area would yield if it were "developed" on a purely money-making policy. The same landlord has more than one similar village community dependent on his inherited love of land put to good use. Since the days of the Farmer King, his name has been on the roll of honour of English agriculturists. While he can draw on other sources of wealth, probably he will never let a good acre in his possession go down to waste, hoping for a return of the days when national policy allows farming to be a profitable industry.

But—how long can it last in his case and in the case of many others like him who are keeping English lands in tilth by personal sacrifice? Within a very brief time it must pass away. Direct taxation represents more than 20s. in the £ of that landlord's income. And

the proceeds of confiscating his property go not into building up some other form of good national wealth-making, but in the pauperizing of the people.

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Summed up, the results of our Parliamentary financial system have been : the grossest administrative extravagance ; the pauperization of the people ; the confiscation of the national accumulations of wealth to finance this extravagance and pauperization. All political parties have conspired to this end. Is there in the mind of any reasonable man the shadow of a hope that any political party will make a change?

CHAPTER VI

Social Reform

THE strongest claim made in favour of the polyarchy is that it promotes "social reform"; the mass of the people, being the voters, can enforce those measures which will make for the "greatest happiness of the greatest number". The claim is founded on two presumptions, both false: that the average voter can be expected to come to a rational judgement of proposals put forward to secure his happiness; that the average candidate will be able and willing to give intelligent and honest advice and will reject all temptation to seek support on specious promises and bribing proposals.

Experience shows that a "social reform" policy and a system of Parliamentary government inevitably interact to each other's detriment. A "social reform" policy (meaning a policy to secure good living conditions for all the members of a nation), controlled by an intelligent despotism, is easily conceivable. An

example is ancient Peru under the Incas. On the evidence, which is clear and ample, living conditions in Peru before the Spanish occupation were ideal. Poverty and unemployment were unknown; every family had a reasonable degree of comfort. But the Government was a theocratic despotism, all power centred in the sacred Inca.

It is also conceivable that a democratic Parliamentary system of government could exist free from grave scandals of maladministration in a nation which was sternly individualistic and kept all "social reform" matters outside the province of government. A school of political philosophers, of whom Herbert Spencer is typical, imagined a system of Parliamentary government which left its subjects almost complete liberty, the functions of government narrowly confined to such matters as it might be presumed the people governed would be willing with practical unanimity to delegate. Such an individualistic State—its powers restricted to police regulation and the administration of justice, having few servants, and those presumably disfranchised, carrying on no State industries, dispensing no doles and able to offer no bribes—might be possibly governed with success by Parliamentary democracy. The

issues to come before the voters would be few and simple; temptations to deflect their judgement would be almost absent; candidates of intelligence and public spirit would be encouraged to come forward, in a community such as the British with its high tradition of public service; there would not be the deterring factor of having to engage in a squalid contest of bribery and humbug.

Such an individualistic State, in complete antagonism to the Platonic State, may still represent to some minds the ideal State, but for two reasons it can hardly be considered a realizable ideal in these days. The first reason is that the citizens have been too long trained to believe that it is the function of the State to carry on those activities which come within the description of "social reforms"—the care of the aged, the poor, the sick, the regulation of wages and labour conditions. The second reason is that such an individualistic State would find it difficult, if not impossible, to maintain its position in a world where other States were organized to a great degree on collectivist lines. In matters of trade and industry, for example, it could have no answer to foreign tariffs, foreign bonuses on exports. In matters of national defence, which come more and more to be based

on means of supply, it would be at a grave disadvantage.

In my opinion the training of the community to believe in the Government as the best, or even as a good agency, of "social reform" has been a profound mistake ; if the same amount of effort had been devoted to educating the people as to how they could voluntarily apply their goodwill and sense of fair play to the problems of the new industrial era of civilization, the sick, the poor, the weak would be better cared for, and honest industry would have a richer reward and ampler opportunity. Human nature is prone to justice and charity rather than to the opposite qualities, and is far more easily persuaded than compelled to give a "fair deal". Among savage and semi-savage peoples, where charity does not march between the tax-gatherer and the policeman, there is a far more brotherly sense of social partnership than in a State Socialistic community such as our own. In the more primitive Moslem communities (such as the Bedouin Arabs) I have noted, as so many others have noted, the high degree to which the duty of brotherly help and charity is observed without any legislative compulsion. And in our community it may be noted that where some relation of life has escaped as yet

the regulation of the law, it is usually governed by kindness and fairness : a "debt of honour" is more binding than a legal debt.

It is, however, practically useless to discuss the possibilities of an individualistic State, in which the Brotherhood of Man would be allowed to express itself freely and voluntarily and not be attempted to be enforced by legislation and taxation. We are committed to the Platonic idea of the State, the State which will regulate the lives of its citizens ; and in such a State, government by the democratic Parliamentary system must degenerate, with more or less rapidity according to the character of the people, into an auction of authority, with the power ultimately falling into the hands of those who can offer the most "bread and games". The process of degeneration may be slowed down, may be for a time arrested, by the phenomenon of a strong, honest man intruding into political life. Then temporarily "the old customs and phrases are confronted, turned back, or laid away". But it is only an interruption. Kleon is always around the corner waiting to mount the tribunal again.

The political history of Great Britain during this century shows the normal trend of events. With the briefest of interruptions the policy of

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bribery under the name of "social reform" has decided the issues; and with each year the bribery has become more shameful and less ashamed, until now no party and but few individuals are free from its taint.

"Social reform" under an intelligent despotism, whilst striving to secure for all equality of opportunity, fair reward for work, and both the leisure and the means for recreation, would recognize that Man's chief happiness is in honest labour; that the normal individual bases his content on his tasks, and the rewards of those tasks are not only the financial rewards but also those of the honour and approbation of his fellows—the "consciousness of a duty that is done", the delight in a service well-performed. "Social reform" under the British system of Parliamentary government has been divorced altogether from any ethical or even moral basis. It has become a naked expropriation of the few to encourage idleness and fecklessness in the many.

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To give a typical instance of "social reform" as interpreted by a Parliamentary democracy. Following the War there was a grave housing shortage in Great Britain (that shortage had its

first origin in the pre-War "People's Budget" of Mr. Lloyd George which killed speculative building). With the demobilization of the Army there was available a great volume of skilled and semi-skilled building labour—of men who had been engaged in building work for the Forces. To set those to help to build the bitterly-needed houses was an obvious "social reform". But the Building Trade Unions, allowed by our political system the power to do so, vetoed any such beneficial use of a surplus to meet a need. To have allowed these ex-service men to "dilute" the close corporations of building labour might have been dangerous to the policy of "ca' canny" and exploitation which they were following.

So the ex-service men had to be idle and the workers wanting homes had to wait. It was thought better to grapple with the housing shortage by the methods of doles and confiscations. Hundreds of millions were lavished in subsidies for house-building (in consequence, the cost of a small house in Great Britain is double that of a comparable house in any of our neighbouring European countries). Rent Restriction Acts heartlessly confiscated the rights of many small property holders. In consequence, there were cases created of actual

destitution among owners forced to accept the old rent for their property whilst their tenants "profiteered" to the extent of some pounds a week by sub-letting. A typical case brought to my notice was of a widow drawing 18s. a week from two cottages, the tenants of which were drawing a total of £2 17s. 6d. from various sub-lettings. Nor was overcrowding cured after eleven years of this method of social reform, and to-day there is talk of the urgency of "slum clearance" and the problem of hundreds of thousands of people where a family is crowded into one room or less.

The ghastly incompetency of this Parliamentary tyranny is its ruling characteristic. It does not hesitate to rob, so long as the robbed have not command of great numbers of votes, but the proceeds of its robberies are frittered away and relieve nobody. An intelligent government would have had the housing shortage relieved by 1922 at the latest and with the exercise of much less compulsion; but it would have needed the courage to defy the obscurantism and greed of certain Trade Union bosses. No government dependent on the present voting system will ever have that courage.

The management of the coal industry—next to agriculture the most important of the

nation's resources—provides another instance. During the course of the War, coal-mining being an occupation protected from the operations of the Compulsory Service Acts, the coal-pits offered a shelter for men who wished to avoid military service. There were added to the ranks of the regular miners—who were, in my experience, the cream of the community for courage and loyalty—many thousands who became coal miners so as not to be soldiers. The mines were temporarily under State control, and the owners guaranteed their profits. The State control under our political system was naturally inefficient, and it was nobody's interest to prevent the growth of labour-wasting devices. After the period of control there was no attempt at economic reorganization. The "social reform" policy forbade. A dole to subsidize wages was the only remedy which the politicians could think of, and the industry has since staggered from crisis to crisis and to-day is faced with further legislative interference which threatens it with another crisis.

The regulation of the hours of work of shop assistants is yet another instance. Granted that shop assistants should enjoy reasonable leisure, there is still no case for the tyrannical and inefficient legislation by which this object

is sought, inflicting grave inconvenience on the general public and grave injustice on small shopkeepers seeking to make a livelihood by serving the convenience of their neighbours.

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There could be cited scores of other examples of inefficiency and tyranny under the "social reform" policy of our political system; but it can be admitted that in Great Britain we have not yet got quite down to the depths in this regard of the United States, where some fifty years ago Mr. Anthony Comstock was appointed under an Act of Congress "special agent of the United States Post Office", with power to censor obscene literature, pictures, etc.—power used to ban "Œdipus Rex", "The Cenci", and "Ghosts", also an "insufficiently-clad wax figure in a Broadway shop. In the United States it is possible for the city of Norphelt, Arkansas, to have on its municipal statute book an ordinance :

Sec. 1.—Hereafter it shall be unlawful for any man and woman, male or female, to be guilty of committing the act of sexual intercourse between themselves at any place within the corporate limits of said town.

Sec. 3.—Section one of this ordinance shall not

apply to married persons as between themselves, and their husband and wife, unless of a grossly improper and lascivious nature.

“Social reform” has not come to that yet in Great Britain. But there is no reason to be sure that it will not : at present it is so busily concerned with looking for doles that it does not give much attention to snooping for vice ; but any absurdity is possible under a polyarchy. With its illusion that the acts of the government are “broad-based upon the people’s will”, it deprives the individual of liberty to a greater extent and inflicts upon him more ridiculous restrictions than any intelligent despotism would dare to do.

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But the final tragedy of “social reform” as administered by the polyarchy has yet to come. The reaction of it on industrial organization has been devastating. Taxation, pushed to the point of confiscation, has deprived the land of its capital and factories of the necessary funds for re-equipment. State extravagance has seriously weighted all our export industries. In 1914 the cost of national administration, including the “social services”, was 2d. per labour hour : in 1924 it was 7d. per labour

hour—the difference, 5d. per hour, represented the full wage rate of some of our competitors. Wages in “sheltered” industries have risen out of all proportion to wages in industries which have to sell their products abroad ; a municipal dustman or a tram guard has been put in a better position than a skilled engineer, and many of the best of our mechanics have been driven abroad. And its most serious effect has been on the national character, in sapping self-reliance and in encouraging idleness. The “bulldog” strain is fast being eliminated. Was it an indication of political remorse that one found in the records of public expenditure in 1925 a quaint item recording a considerable sum being spent on investigating deafness in bulldogs?

The final tragedy will come when “social reform”, based on confiscation, extravagance, and incompetence, will go bankrupt. The doles will be no longer collectable, and the people who have become dependent on doles will be poorly equipped to face the necessity of supporting themselves.

Can that tragedy be averted? There is hope in the fact that one European country, when on the edge of disaster from the same causes, has been saved.

CHAPTER VII

The Example of Italy

ITALY began its new national life last century by imitating with faithful exactness the British political system, and soon developed the poisons incidental to that system in a virulent form. Pre-War Italy, Italy during the World War, and post-War Italy until 1922, suffered even more severely than Great Britain from the poly-archival disease (of which the symptoms are the exaltation of the talking man and the setting up of demagogic bribery as the governing principle of national administration).

Italian admiration for British Parliamentary institutions (which were not then showing the decay of to-day) undoubtedly had a great influence on the United Italy of 1871, and prompted the setting up of political institutions after our model. Italy then began the business of governing, in the full confidence that it was on a good path to public order and public prosperity. At first, supported by the fervour of national feeling which the *Risorgimento* had

evoked, Parliamentary government in Italy was not gravely unsatisfactory, though it did not give to the new nation the vigorous leadership that was wanted. Soon a drift to the bad began, and year by year accelerated. Parliamentary parties split up into groups. Leaders who had been inspired by national sentiments gave place largely to men whose motives were personal ambition or sordid greed. In time it came to be the common system for those people who had selfish designs on the public purse to place in Parliament their hirelings whom they controlled with the decisions of secret caucuses. A few good men struggled gallantly against the rising flood of inefficiency and corruption. For a time a Socialist Party gave promise of better things, bringing into the political arena at least a definite and an honest purpose. Then this Socialist Party began to be infected with internationalism and, in proportion as it ceased to be Italian in purpose, became useless or mischievous.

Before the World War broke out in 1914, Parliamentary government in Italy was clearly breaking down. Cabinets followed one another in rapid succession: they took place but not power. What laws were passed were usually by Royal decree, not legislative enactment.

For some years Parliament did not even discuss the annual budget. Had the World War not come it is impossible to believe that democratic Parliamentary government in Italy could have long survived. I can recall Italians saying to me that the only hope of the country was that it should be taken over by some practical people with organizing ability, "like the Germans". The Italian of that day with a desire for peace and orderliness was sceptical in regard to British Parliamentary institutions, which had degenerated so rapidly within the century.

When the World War broke out the Italian politicians could give their country no sure lead. There was a party for intervention on the side of Germany, a party for intervention on the other side, but the great majority hesitant. Then a "Fascio"—a "union" or "league"—was formed in 1915 by Signor Mussolini, who had been one of the chief leaders of the Socialist Party, to advance his faith that Italy, in her own interests and for the sake of civilization, should join in the War against the German Powers. This Fascio, with its vigorous, earnest leader, largely helped to decide the issue. Italy joined in the War. Mussolini, resisting the temptation to stay at home and reap the adulation which came to him as

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journalist and political leader as the result of his movement for intervention, joined the Army, served as a private soldier and later as a sergeant.

On service he could note the scandalously inept political conduct of the War. Italy was more unfortunate in this respect even than other countries. The degree of political interference with operations was fantastic. I have been informed, on authority which I fully credit, that it was one of the bright ideas of these Italian politicians that there was a danger of Army commanders coming under suspicion of favouring units or individuals if they disposed of their forces in proper echelon, and that this was the explanation of the overcrowding of the front-line trenches and the starving of the reserve lines.

Italy came out of the War with a feeling of baffled resentment and discouragement, not allayed by the attempt of the late Mr. President Wilson to interfere directly in its affairs. The pro-German elements in the nation, which had been opposed to intervention in the War, lifted their voices to declare that the country had lost over 600,000 dead to gain what could have been gained by peaceful agreement.

I had to visit Italy early in 1919, and the

country gave the impression then of being on the point of dissolution as a civilized community. Everywhere were disorder and discontent. Some detachments of the British Force which had marched to the Italian Front in the previous year were still in Italy, and attacks on their camps and their food convoys were common occurrences. The Italian authorities, humiliating and dangerous as these incidents were, could not intervene to preserve order.

With each month the danger of national dissolution grew. The International Communist sect at Moscow directed its forces to bring Italy into the maelstrom of the World Revolution. To meet this effort there was no national leadership. The men of Parliament failed to use the one good instrument near to their hands, the spirit of comradeship of the combatant army. They preferred to bargain with the revolutionaries and to make terms with rapine and murder.

Mussolini stepped into the breach, and to combat the "Reds" organized a new "Fascio of Combatants", of the men who had fought in the War and now set themselves up as the guardians of the national honour. The Government had practically abdicated its functions. It could not prevent its soldiers and

its servants being attacked and murdered, the churches from being closed by force, the factories, estates, and railways from being seized, and the population put to the duress of starvation. It was accustomed to enter into negotiations on terms of equality with the revolutionary organizations, and to discuss on what terms estates and workshops seized by violence could be held by their captors.

At first the Mussolini Fascists tried Parliamentary methods in their relations with the Government, though assuming the right to intervene directly, and on their own initiative, against the violence of the revolutionary gangs. In March, 1919, they set forth a national programme, moderate and sensible in every respect. This aimed to capture Parliament, and by Parliamentary means to regenerate Italy. At this stage the enrolled Fascisti numbered about 150,000 members, the majority of whom were ex-service men, the balance young professional men, farmers, mechanics, labourers.

But though a Fascist Party was returned to Parliament, it found itself helpless in face of administrators who had no other capacities than to fear, to postpone, and to placate. In July, 1922, there was the first hint of Revolution.

Then the "Reds" had organized a General Strike. The Fascisti gave the Government "forty hours' notice to act effectively in defence of the State". The Government had no knowledge of how to act effectively. The next month the Fascist warnings were more peremptory, "to govern or to go". The "March to Rome" followed, with this declaration on its banners: "Our goal is to build up a single and united State of all the strength of the Italian nation as the sole repository of our past history and of our future."

It was apparently an adventure of the utmost rashness for this little band of voluntary militia, armed with little but resolve, to set out to restore a kingdom. But it won an instant success. Mussolini had judged wisely, "that Italy, left as without life, waits for him who shall yet heal her wounds and cleanse those sores that for long have festered. It is seen how she entreats God to send someone who shall deliver her from these wrongs and barbarous insolencies. It is seen also that she is ready and willing to follow a banner if only someone will raise it". The house of the politicians crumbled. Entrusted by the King with the government, Mussolini began to rule on the principle "that the affairs of the State must be directed not by those

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who seek to flatter the selfish hopes of the individual, but by those who have the highest faith in the State and who will lead it to its greatest expression of strength”.

That was the beginning of what is known as the Fascist regime. The governing principle of that regime is this : The State is more than the sum of its individuals of one generation ; it has an actual entity of its own, a transcendental existence deriving from the past, from the present *and* the future. To this State Man owes obedience. His duties to this State and his rights under this State are indissolubly bound, so that, as Socrates in his prison said of pleasure and pain, you might fancy them the two ends of the same thing. He has no rights except those which follow from a true performance of duties, especially no right to a vote giving a share in the control of the State.

This idea of the State is, of course, not peculiar to Fascism. It is implicit in all the patriotic sentiment which has “my country” or “the Fatherland” as a theme. No nation’s statecraft follows Herbert Spencer’s conception of the State as a mutual assurance society with authority no greater than a free meeting of its citizens would agree to give it. But Fascism is logical ; sweeps away all pretences as to the

“sacred rights of the people” ; insists that the idea which the phrase “my country” represents, is the true basis of government. Man, it holds, is not born with individual rights, but with a duty to his State. He must do that duty and thereby earn liberties and privileges.

The monarchy under the Fascist regime is loyally regarded. It is the means of continuity of government. All things are done in the King's name on the advice of his Prime Minister ; but this Prime Minister is actually Dictator. His Cabinet is a Council of State chosen by him alone. It is now made up of some of the ablest men of the State. Mussolini for a time sought to govern with the help chiefly of the men who had actually helped in the revolution of 1922. Experience taught that ardour in revolt does not presume skill in administration. Reluctantly—with too much delay of reluctance, some say—he retired them, and at present he has a council of expert statesmen and administrators. This is the Government.

Parliament is made up of the Senate, members of which hold office for life on the nomination of the King, and a chamber of representatives of every national interest (the industries, the trades, the professions, the arts).

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These representatives are not elected in the manner of a British Parliament. They are, in the first place, nominees of their industrial or mercantile syndicates or of their professions; then approved by the Government; then submitted for endorsement of the people by a referendum. This referendum is the only concession that Signor Mussolini has so far made to the idea of Mount Sinai as a gigantic mound of ballot-boxes from which the voice of God is to be heard. It is a referendum which is to be explained only by the desire to show that the people are almost unanimous in support of his regime; for there were no alternative candidates offered; the popular chamber was, in effect, nominated, not elected.

In local government, the same system of control has been set up under laws passed in 1926. Elective municipal bodies have been abolished. Each province is under the care of a Prefect, appointed by the Central Government to act "in conformity with the general policy of the Government, for ensuring unity of political aim in the working out of the several services appertaining to the State and local authorities, within their respective provinces, by co-ordinating the work of all public offices and supervising all services". The Prefect must

govern in the spirit and letter of the instructions of the Central Government.

Under the Prefects in the provinces there were of old elected municipal councils with mayors at their head. These have been abolished. The municipality is now governed by a Podesta who is nominated by the Central Government through the Prefect. The Podesta, appointed for a five years' term which may be renewed indefinitely, has all the powers of a Mayor and his Town Council. He may have, to assist him, an advisory council, partly nominated by the Prefect of the province, partly by local organizations. But his is the sole responsibility to the Central Government, his the sole power in the municipality. Thus Municipal Government conforms to National Government in the complete abrogation of the elective system. The ballot-box is consigned to the museum.

Political organizations hostile to the Government, or capable of being hostile, are not allowed to exist, nor can newspapers attack or criticize the Government. Civil servants must be well affected politically towards the Government and carry on energetically the tasks entrusted to them or are liable to dismissal. They are advised that is not their part to be

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solicitous about their pay or their conditions of work, but to be earnest only in doing their best for Italy, trusting to their country to give them just recompense.

The present Dictator came to power because, when it was clear that the Parliamentary factions could not rule, he made a bold offer to take the responsibility and was entrusted with the confidence of his King. But Fascism does not presume on an immortal Mussolini. If the misfortune should happen that he were suddenly taken away, there is provision, I am told, that his "political testament" will nominate to the King a successor, and that, on the strength of that nomination, the Fascisti would give loyalty to this successor. But, in the ordinary course of events, Mussolini can be expected to have many years left of vigorous life. After then?

There is probably in his mind, and in the minds of those around him, the idea of a revival of that system of the Roman Empire of which Gibbon wrote: "If a man were called on to fix the period in the history of the world in which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus." That system was the "Adoptive

System'' which gave to Rome as rulers in succession, Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus, and Marcus Aurelius. Rome, having by good fortune secured one great ruler, gave to him full power, and when he had exercised power wisely and well for a number of years, entrusted to him the task of adopting as his successor the man whom he thought most fitting to carry on his work—this man not by any means necessarily his son or related to him by blood. The system rejected popular election of a ruler and it recognized that a wise father may have a foolish son; but believed that a great and good ruler could, in the maturity of his judgment, choose a worthy successor. The system gave to the Roman world for a century excellent rulers; and ceased when Marcus Aurelius, instead of adopting a successor, left the power to be inherited by his son, Commodus, and a satyr followed a sage.

Italian Fascism, I think, will follow that precedent and confide to Mussolini the task, in due course, of "adopting" the next Prime Minister—the next Dictator.

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In the spring of 1927 I took the occasion of

an extended stay in Italy to study closely the working of the Fascist administration and to check its results by statistical and other evidence, and by personal inquiry. For this investigation I was courteously given facilities by Signor Mussolini and members of his administration, though, frankly, I did not find them more than politely interested in what a foreigner thought of the work of Fascism ; there was not apparent any inclination to consider the work of Italians to regenerate Italy as a matter concerning anyone but the Italians.

After five years of Fascism in place of a disorderly, disintegrating (and, I fear I must add, dirty) country, in which law, order, and decency were perishing, bribery and corruption rampant, and industry falling to ruin, I found an orderly, prospering, happy country, abounding in national pride and vigour, "making good" financially and industrially in spite of poor resources ; no strikes, no "profiteering", no doles, no grinding of the faces of the poor, no need to bribe public servants to secure their attention, every department of life running smoothly, decently. But the price paid for these benefits—the loss of "liberty", the over-setting of that Mount Sinai built up of ballot-boxes, where the voice of the people may declare as

from God the Tables of the Law? I could not find an Italian who was aware of any loss of liberty, any sense of grievance because he could no longer by his vote put into office one set or another of disastrous politicians. On the contrary there was everywhere manifest a new sense of national pride and civic dignity, a new confidence in the future. Worker, manufacturer, farmer, banker, professional man alike were content.

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To record in the barest summary some of the achievements of Italy contrasted with the state of affairs current in Great Britain.

In Great Britain we face 1930 with our national borrowing power degraded to a five per cent basis; with our National Debt actually a heavier burden than on the date of the Armistice; with our national accounts stained by expedients which a Socialist Chancellor of the Exchequer, referring to the record of a Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer, claimed that, if adopted in private business, "they would put somebody in the dock". Yet our reserves of private wealth have been so depleted that hardly one of the old private fortunes survives, and one great estate after

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another is being broken up, with the knowledge of its old possessors that their wealth has been dissipated, not to lessen the burden of the War debt, but to sap the character of the people with doles. Every Budget brings new taxes. Industry cannot equip itself with modern plant because of the inexorable hand of the tax-gatherer ; the bonds of public and of private enterprises flow swiftly into the treasuries of the foreigners ; the gracious amenities of our historic civilization are passing into ruin or being sold abroad.

Italy, on the other hand, has miraculously reformed its public finances. In 1922, at which date its politicians had brought it almost to the last gasp, Italy had a Budget deficit of 15,760,000,000 lire. In 1926 there was a surplus of 2,268,000,000 lire. The difference in the two Budgets is 18,028,000,000 lire ! National expenditure was reduced from 35,461,000,000 lire in 1922 to 18,755,000,000 lire in 1926, almost by fifty per cent. This was effected side by side with a great increase in the efficiency of all public services, defence, transport, postal, educational, and other. The railways (a State service in Italy) may be cited as one example. They used to be the worst in West Europe ; to-day they are among the

best. The deficit on the working of the railways was 1,460,000,000 lire in 1922 ; the surplus was 378,000,000 lire in 1926. The work done by the railways has increased fifty per cent ; the coal consumption per ton moved by steam traction has fallen twenty-five per cent. Similarly all the public services have been reorganized : redundant departments abolished, waste officials retired, true economy effected.

Recent Italian Budgets have invariably reduced taxation. The death duties (confiscatory in Great Britain) have been abolished in Italy in the case of property passing on to the natural heirs ; greatly reduced in other cases so as to encourage the growth of capital. The last Italian Budget abolished fourteen separate taxes, representing 500 million lire annually. The old *octroi* (municipal customs taxes) have been swept away. Yet that Budget showed a surplus of 1,132 million lire (allowing a large, unexpected payment to the Vatican to be met out of revenue and still leaving a credit balance).

It is instructive to note that as a result of this good showing, the Finance Minister argued : " We must have even stricter administrative economy so that we can further reduce taxation." Yet already administrative economy in Italy has been carried to a stage which to

English observers reads like a fairy-tale. In some departments the number of functionaries has been reduced by fully one-third, with an accompanying remarkable increase of efficiency (as is quite natural; drones hamper work and destroy the zeal of the industrious). But it has not been the case that the superfluous men of the public services have been thrown out into the streets to starve; in most cases productive work has been found for them in other quarters. The number of Italian unemployed, in spite of the grave export crisis which the stabilization of the lira* and the return to the gold standard involved, is not formidable (the figure, March, 1930, was 385,000, much of it seasonal).

In Great Britain agriculture is accepted by the politicians as a "lost cause". Every year more acres pass out of cultivation more people leave the land, production dwindles.

In Italy, since 1922, a vigorous agricultural campaign has raised the average yield per acre

* In the stabilization of the lira on a basis of less than 100 to the £ sterling (France stabilized the franc at 125 to the £ sterling), Italy took up a very heavy burden—too heavy a burden in the opinion of some economists. But the motive was good; to do the best possible for the national creditors. In considering Italy's position to-day it must be kept in mind that of all the combatant peoples of the European Continent she made the greatest sacrifice to honesty.

of wheat by forty per cent, and whereas the country used to import one-third of its wheat needs, it is now necessary to import only one-seventh. Italian agriculture was, after the War, not in the desperate position of British agriculture; almost all the national land was being cultivated; there were few wasted acres; the only scope for improvement was in bettering the yield of areas already under cultivation and in reclaiming marsh areas. The returns from the last Italian harvest show the following betterments as compared with 1923: 400,000 metric tons more wheat; 300,000 tons more potatoes; 800,000 tons more beetroots; 300,000 tons more vegetables; 150,000 tons more rice; improvements in the yields of other crops, making the increase in food production over 2,000,000 metric tons. These results, which have meant more food for the population, more employment, better conditions for the farmers, less imports of foreign food, have come chiefly from the vigorous campaign to improve seed, fertilizers, and agricultural machinery. But in part it has come from reclaiming waste lands. More than 5,000,000 Italian acres have been reclaimed for the plough or for pasture. Chiefly this work has been done by ex-service men, organized under their old Field officers. Instead

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of being allowed to fester in idleness and live on the bitter bread of charity, the ex-soldiers of Italy, having saved their country in war, have been given the chance to save it again in peace. It is claimed, and I believe truthfully, that there is not one worthy ex-service man unemployed in Italy to-day. In finding work, Mussolini has acted on the wise principle that an officer or non-commissioned officer who showed the faculty of leadership in the trenches is presumably fit for leadership in a task of industry.

I shall cite one other respect in which the contrast between British political maladministration and the efficient government of Italy since 1922 stands out.

The gravest of British political scandals in the post-War era has been the laziness and fecklessness which followed a dole system rather than a reconstructive works system to meet unemployment. In our country we have wasted thousands of millions in keeping people workless, when with half the money we could have kept them at useful and ultimately profitable work. There were several urgent tasks to be done in this country which would have kept those willing to work in steady employment. To have abolished the wasteful and unwholesome use of soft coal as a fuel, substituting for it

pit-head conversion of coal into electricity, gas, oil, and smokeless fuel, would have cost a great deal—in the aggregate, perhaps, about two years' doles—but it would be now returning rich dividends in money and in public health and comfort. To have reclaimed and put into tilth the marsh-lands of our country and to have drained thoroughly the areas which, whilst not exactly marsh, are sodden and not fully productive, would have been another expensive but profitable task. We had all the resources to do both; but political stupidity and inertia stood in the way.

Italy has, for the last eight years, in spite of poor capital resources, followed a policy of intensive national development. Electrical progress alone has absorbed scores of thousands of workers. In the Upper Adige, between 1922 and 1927, electrical power was increased from 94 million kw. to 433 million kw., and soon the 1927 figure will be doubled. Land reclamations, railway and harbour works, provision of water-supplies, etc., have been other fruitful activities. To give the idle man a task, not a dole, has been the keynote of Government policy, and its principle "to stand firmly against the Socialist tendency to bureaucracy". The Government-paid, or dole-fed, drone has been

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discouraged, the productive worker encouraged. The latest task to which the national energy is being directed is that of taming the torrential rivers and disciplining them to keep to their beds and not to spoil the valley lands.

Again the difference is between talking and bribing politicians and faithful, patriotic administrators. The dictatorship, by choosing the best men for administrative work, has abolished the talker and the intriguer in municipal as well as in national government, and has within five years brought Italy from a ruinous anarchy to a prospering content. It is a lesson for all the world—not necessarily as regards methods, for each people its own methods—but in the great truth it establishes that a reasonable people will respond to an appeal to duty made by a resolute leader.

Can this example be followed in Great Britain? It can be unless we are to accept as true that the British race is inferior to the Italian. It must be—in principle though not in detail—if Great Britain is to regain her old position in the world and not justify the amiable French opinion that we are "the conquered nation of the War".

CHAPTER VIII

A British Solution

THAT there is deep uneasiness among most thoughtful British people at the present trend of affairs is plain. But that uneasiness is turned from useful channels by its pessimist conclusion : " Yes, we are going quickly to ruin ; but what can be done ? We have tried all the political parties. One is as bad as the other. There is no remedy."

That pessimism is founded on the false idea that this present Parliamentary system is part of the fibre of the nation's existence ; that it is as indispensable as the lungs to the body ; that it cannot be reformed and also cannot be ended.

Agreed that it cannot be reformed. But the experience of Italy has shown that it can be ended. In 1922, when efficient and seemly government was brought into that country by the bold excision of the Party political cancer, there was striking unanimity among British politicians of all creeds, Conservative, Liberal,

and Socialist, that the early collapse of the patient was certain. The idea of governing a country on the principle "that the affairs of the State must be directed not by those who seek to flatter the selfish hopes of the individual, but by those who have the highest faith in the State, and who will lead it to its greatest expression of strength", was, to them, obviously mad. But the patient has not died ; instead has progressed from strength to strength. Italy to-day, considering the resources at its disposal, is a prospering country, and the people are the most generally contented with their Government of any in the world.

Should we, then, set out to imitate Italy?

In principle, yes. In method, not necessarily.

All that was suitable (and probably necessary) for a Latin nation might not be suitable (nor necessary) for the British nation. The Italian regime—to give one example—abolishes the freedom of the Press and the right of public meeting. Such precautions against sedition may be accepted as necessary in Italy without agreeing that they would be necessary in Great Britain, where probably an honest administration would have no need to fear that free criticism would endanger its work or threaten the maintenance of public order. But the Italian

regime has succeeded so wonderfully in taking a country from the verge of ruin—a position to which it had been brought by exactly the same political evils as afflict Great Britain to-day—that its line of action must command close and sympathetic consideration. There is no need to envisage a “March to London” with the British monarch obliged to repudiate (as the Italian monarch had to do) a proclamation wrongfully issued in his name, and sending for a leader who was in actual armed revolt against those pretending to act in the King’s name. The course of events may be much less dramatic than that, but in the course of events there must be certainly a period of rule in which the administration will have power to over-ride, as Signor Mussolini over-rode, the opposition of the Party political factions.

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In Great Britain the course of events is predictable with some certainty in the near, one might almost write the immediate, future. It will be the near future if events progress with only the normal acceleration of a downhill descent; it will be the immediate future if, by some mischance, which is not at all inconceivable,

events abroad develop in such a manner as to throw another strain on our resources. There will come the time when the grandiose fabric of State charity, financed out of the funds extracted from a small minority, will break down ; will, to put it plainly, go bankrupt.

At present a Socialist Government is in power with no likelihood of being supplanted. At its head is an opportunist who has never shown signs of having a fixed economic or financial faith, who would probably prefer to remain Prime Minister standing on a "Moderate" platform, but who has proved that his sole fixed principle is to be Vicar of Bray, whether under a Red Flag or the Union Jack. His Chancellor of the Exchequer is of sterner principle and apparently really believes in something. He has announced that he believes in taxation as a means to Socialism (speech at Birmingham, October, 1928) :

I am confident that we have in the weapon of taxation the means by which a great deal can be done, perhaps more quickly than in any other way, to redress social evils and at the same time to provide the funds for carrying out those schemes of social welfare and national reconstruction which it is the aim of this Labour programme to promote.

Nevertheless, he is a gentleman of such

correct financial demeanour as to make many in "the City" believe that he cannot be so dangerous a fellow, after all. They will see. The late Judge Jeffreys is alleged on his Bloody Assizes to have once addressed an accused prisoner before his trial :

" Damme, I'll hang you ; but I'll hang you justly."

Mr. Snowden may be trusted to use his weapon of taxation in a technically correct manner ; the gallows will be erected by Union labour in strict compliance with the Washington Eight Hours' Convention ; the rope knotted and greased with humane consideration for the victims' feelings. But he will use it, is using it ; there have been already many financial executions of the wicked capitalist, as the steeply rising figures of unemployment have indicated. They are going on now from day to day. Since these financial executions, like other executions, are not in public, they do not attract much attention. But those who are in the list of future victims cannot help noticing ; and are giving uneasy thought to the question whether it would not be wise to avoid execution by flight ; if many decide to do so, the bankruptcy of the dole policy will come with a rush.

It is not necessary to found a reasonable

forecast of the future on the assumption (though that is the likely one) of the Socialist administration continuing in power. Should it happen—by some accident not probable at the time of writing—that Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and Mr. Snowden have to give way to Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Winston Churchill, or to Mr. Lloyd George and his chosen Chancellor of the Exchequer, it would be foolish optimism to presume that “the weapon of taxation” would be put aside. It would be used probably as drastically by them in the future as in the past, with the difference only that there would be a different description of the objective aimed at ; it would not be called Socialism, but a “bold roads policy” or “peace in our time”. There is really little difference, except in name, between the programmes of the three political Parties. They all represent the same policy : a bid for power by offering charity benefits to the voters and finding the money where it can be found.

There is, of course, the infinitesimal chance of one party “going honest” and appealing to the electors on a policy of financial and administrative reform and sound agrarian and economic development. The response to such an appeal, if it were put forward in the right spirit by the right men, would probably be a startling surprise

to the old political gangs, who have always acted on the assumption that the British character in politics is governed by the instinct of the pickpocket and the shirker. But the chance is at the moment too slender to be taken into practical consideration. One has to presume that the present political methods will continue.

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The extension of State charity and the finding of the money for it are having and will continue to have, at a quickly progressive rate, these effects :

1. Honest effort at self-support is becoming out of fashion. Men and women are beginning to feel that it is foolish not to take advantage of the various so easily accessible doles and benefits. With over 2,000,000 unemployed, it is to-day impossible to get workers in some vocations.

2. Enterprising, self-respecting skilled labour seeks to get away from the country which is becoming a Land of Promise to dolers and dustmen only.

3. Manufacturers under the burden of confiscatory taxation are letting their plant and premises and organizations drift into the derelict state ; after the tax-gatherer has called, there are no funds to finance progressive policy.

4. Holders of capital resources are beginning to look anxiously around for means to get them away from this country.

These effects are apparent in disquieting degree already. Nos. 1 and 4 are the most dangerous because of their tendency to quick acceleration. The comparatively few who are saying to-day : "Let us get out of work for a spell ; we shall be just as well off" or "Let us get our resources out of Britain and give up the struggle to maintain estates there", may spread a rapid contagion.

It is safe, therefore, to forecast a quick development into a "Dole Bankruptcy". The recipients of State charity will so increase and the number of those from whom funds can be extracted will so decrease that it will become obviously impossible to carry on.

What will be the next development? Impossible, of course, to say with absolute certainty ; we go now out of the region of prognostication

into that of prophecy. But a reasonable guess is that the politicians, all three parties of them, faced with the bankruptcy of the system which they have created, will "throw in their hands"; whatever party is Vicar of Bray will find the position undesirable, and none of the other parties will want to take over the rectory with the brokers on the threshold.

If that happens, it will make the opportunity to confide the government of the country to some man of courage and ability outside of the political juntas, who will be able to gather around him a team of administrators and clean up the mess. The opportunity may not come quite so easily as that, but it is a reasonable course of events to presume in our British community. The politicians are, from the nature of their business, timid; and few of them are actually malicious or utterly insensate—they are mostly well-meaning prisoners of a monstrously foolish system. Faced by a grave crisis they would be probably only too willing to hand over peaceably to some strong man. But whether the change-over comes smoothly or with something of a jolt, it is important to keep in mind that under the Constitution it is possible at any time for a man of strength and character to be called in to carry on the King's Government, though he

has never wooed a constituency nor promised a bribe.

The element of "revolution", or "evolution", would come in when that man made it a condition of his taking charge that he should for a term of years be free from the chains of the present Parliamentary system. That would be necessary. Mr. Baldwin proved its necessity when in 1924 he was given absolute power within the Parliamentary system and, having all the good intentions in the world, left things after five years worse than he had found them.

Faced with a grave crisis, all sections of the community would probably acquiesce in the Monarch granting to a man, of proved capacity for leadership and free of all entanglements with the old traditions of bribe and muddle, a clear run for a term of years.

The task facing him would be a heavy one, but obviously not too heavy for accomplishment if consideration is given to these two facts :

1. The British people are, on the whole, the most sensible and good-tempered, as well as the most stubborn people in the world, the most responsive and loyal to good leadership, the best fitted to see through a long up-hill journey.

2. The British race has control of one-fourth of the whole resources of the globe, and has still the best organizing and financial ability, the most skilled workers, in the world.

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To show that I do not minimize the difficulties of the task, I attempt to indicate a few of the steps which are necessary if Great Britain is to be saved. (All these steps will be judged impossible by the political parties ; to the political parties all honest and courageous steps are impossible.)

SOCIAL REFORM. The "dole" should be abolished completely, with provision, during a short transition period, of centres where men and women unable to find suitable employment would be given maintenance in return for work. Unemployment insurance should be restored to the control of the various industries and the Government subsidy abolished by, say, five annual stages.

The disentangling of genuine unemployment insurance from the dole is a most urgent task. The "pooling" of these has been one of the most disastrous of the politicians' bribing devices. Clearly it would not be sound national

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economy to compel temporarily unemployed mechanics to seek maintenance at Labour farms. Clearly, also, we have to restore to its old credit the sound maxim : " If you do not work, neither shall you eat."

A great programme of ultimately reproductive national works should be started at once with the support of the Government, but, as far as possible, under conditions of private enterprise, not bureaucratic control. (Examples of national works : the scientific development of the coal industry so as to use coal at the pit-mouth ; the reclamation of British waste lands and the putting of them to profitable use under a plan of agricultural regeneration.)

Housing subsidies, rent restrictions, all "ca'-canny" and "ring" restrictions on economical house-building should be swept away.

No toleration should be continued for "ca'-canny" or production-limiting devices in any industry, whether by Trade Unions or employers' associations.

Pensions, except such as are contractual payments for past services rendered, should all come under review with a view to their abolition at as early a date as is possible without breach of faith. There should be no pensions which are not on a contributory basis. (The

Old Age Pension could be made practically contributory by paying it to every man and woman reaching the fixed age ; it would be thus a compulsory insurance out of taxation against old age.)

The education policy should be drastically revised on the line of doing away with such absurdities as dragging children from the care of their parents for the sake of putting them under a State educational system (*vide* current legislative proposals *re* bargees' children) and paying parents for the maintenance of their children at school until they reach the age of sixteen (another current legislative proposal). The idea of "education" as a compulsory and subsidized teaching of reading, writing, arithmetic, has become a fetish. The amplest opportunity should be given to every child aspiring to knowledge. But we want in education policy a more sensible definition of "knowledge" ; as that which fits us to do our job in life, and to employ our leisure reasonably. The "education" which sends boys and girls out into the world completely ignorant of any craft useful in field, workshop, or home is not the education but the degradation of the human intelligence.

The fact should be faced that there is not

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opportunity in these islands for all the present population to have a real chance of happy, prospering lives, and there should be promoted a bold migration policy to the Dominions and to the Colonies on the lines of founding numerous small communities of "mixed farming" settlements, which would produce most of their own essential needs and be little dependent on outside resources either for market or for maintenance.

Every phase of national policy in Social Reform should seek to emphasize these principles :

(a) It is a disgrace not to do one's share in the nation's work, to live on any form of charity, unless infirmity compels.

(b) The duty rests primarily with the family of seeing to the welfare of its weaker members. A family which seeks charity for its infants or its old members without the pressure of the sternest necessity is a family which is failing in its social dignity.

(c) Wealth won by good management or good luck, and, most particularly, wealth coming by inheritance is a social trust, and can only be rightfully used by its owner for the better development of the nation's life (in industry, and in art, letters and science). "Idle rich" are social parasites and money used in vain luxury represents a robbery from the common stock.

AGRICULTURE. There is room for a million more families to make a decent livelihood on the land of Great Britain. They should be placed there quickly, some at once ; all within the next ten years, and could be so placed with courageous administration which despised cant cries about "dear food".

The home market for all dairy farm produce should be reserved for the home producer to the limit of his capacity to produce ; the rest of the market reserved for Empire producers in return for preferential custom for British manufacturers.

There should be set up a National Grain Scheme to enforce the home milling of all flour ; to give preference in its wheat purchases firstly, at a stable remunerative price, to the limit of his capacity to produce, to the British grower ; secondly, at the world price, to the Empire grower, and lastly to the foreign grower, only calling on him when the two former sources of supply were exhausted. The Grain Scheme might give consideration to the admixture of a certain amount of rye in the production of the nation's flour, since we can grow more rye than wheat.

The home markets for oats, rye, barley, potatoes and other farm products should equally

be reserved to the home growers up to their capacity to produce.

Reformed marketing to cut out unnecessary middlemen would be essential to a sound scheme of home food production, which would provide cheaper *not* dearer food. The governing principle of such a scheme would be to eat as far as possible the wholesome foodstuffs which we can grow ; any silly people maintaining that we cannot eat, say, five per cent of rye flour or that we must go to Geneva to ask permission to grow our own potatoes, should be condemned to a perpetual diet of thistles.

A beginning should be made at once with the education of apprentice farm workers to provide the labour necessary for rural regeneration.

The patriotism of owners of big estates should be called upon to provide homesteads for small settlers as quickly as they are needed ; that patriotism can be confidently relied upon, but in case of failure of sufficient voluntary offers compulsion would be easy.

INDUSTRY. There should be a common-sense policy to "safeguard" home manufacturers where advisable, this policy to be founded on these principles :

PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT: A FAILURE?

1. There is no question of right or wrong in the controversy between Free Imports and Tariff Duties. It is purely a matter of convenience.

2. A nation should balance in the scale of its own advantage every proposal for a tariff barrier against any particular import. In the case of a nation (like our own) joined in an Empire partnership, it should, whilst considering primarily its Home interests, give due weight to Imperial interests.

3. A tariff duty can be of advantage to serve these ends :

(a) To help a Home industry against outside competition.

(b) To help an Empire industry against foreign competition (by imposing a duty against the foreign but not the Empire producer).

(c) To give a better balance of trade by shutting out, to the extent deemed advantageous, foreign "luxury" imports.

(d) To transfer some of the burden of taxation from the producers to the consumers. Direct taxation (such as Income Tax) is paid almost wholly by the producers. Indirect taxation (through Customs duties) is paid only by the consumers, and may be avoided by the thrifty, e.g., the tax on imported champagne, which anyone can avoid by not drinking champagne.

(e) To serve as a "bargaining counter" to secure fairer treatment of a nation's exports; the duty would be remitted in favour of countries giving concessions in return.

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(f) To ensure Home production of some vital necessity, e.g., the war-time duties on optical glass.

(g) To guard a Home industry against "dumping" designed to destroy it and leave the Home consumers at the mercy of a foreign Combine.

4. A tariff duty can be of disadvantage if it raises the cost of a necessity of life without providing some compensation greater than that inconvenience. There is no virtue in a tariff duty in itself, and when the balance is doubtful in regard to any particular duty, the decision should be against that duty.

Again, no need to go to Geneva for leave, or to continue to give preference to foreign interests over British Empire interests.

The waste of strikes and lock-outs should be eliminated (as it has been in Italy). The industrial policy there is worthy of almost exact imitation; each industry has its "syndic" representing the employers and the workpeople. This syndic usually settles peaceably all controversies about wages and hours; failing to do so, it can appeal to judicial arbitration to settle any point in dispute.

FINANCIAL. The two linked evils are extravagance and excessive taxation. The end of the one would involve the end of the other.

A reduction, by at least twenty-five per cent,

of all Civil Service expenditure, coupled with the stoppage of the doles and bribes, should enable an immediate reduction by at least twenty-five per cent in the rate of all direct taxation, with the firm promise of another twenty-five per cent reduction in the near future, and this would enable a great funding of the National Debt on a three and three-quarter per cent basis, and make possible a Budget in the near future of £500,000,000 a year (which is the utmost limit that the nation can safely bear), working down in time to a lower Budget.

Direct taxation should cut out the bribery element and extend to every man and woman making a livelihood; indirect taxation should avoid as far as possible the necessities of life and concentrate on the luxuries (I do not confuse, as so many do, tariff duties with taxes; prohibitive tariff duties on articles which we can economically produce ourselves are not taxes). The ideal system of taxation would enforce on everyone a minimum and clearly-known sum in direct taxation for the maintenance of the State, and would leave to everyone's personal discretion as to how much they care to add in indirect taxation (as for examples, by indulgence in tobacco and drink, the "pictures" and the "dogs").

Incidentally, all the present jargon of taxation administration should be swept away ; an intelligent schoolchild should be able to understand the nation's taxes.

ADMINISTRATION. All the services of the State are grossly over-manned and involved in a tangle of bureaucratic red-tape which makes quick, efficient work impossible.

A courageous administration would invite all the State's servants to give up voluntarily any privileges which would restrict an efficient reorganization ; and would doubtless get the right response from all but an insignificant minority. Displaced State servants having the necessary capacity should have first preference for positions in works of national development.

There should be emphatic repudiation of the idea that service to the State must be based purely, or even chiefly, on salary considerations (a ridiculous, nay shameful, current instance of this is the claim that £5,000 a year is too small an emolument for the Prime Minister, and that he should have £8,000 or more a year). The honour of serving his country should be the first thought of the State's servant ; and the State should sternly discourage the belief that to live in luxury is the natural aim of an honourable

citizen. Leave luxury to the foolish and the wicked; and make the indulgence of it as reprobate as possible. To save our country, every penny of our resources should be employed *usefully*.

Incidentally, the present maze of legal enactments and administrative orders should be clearly codified and the laws of the land set out in plain English, so that none who can read need run into danger of breaking them. (This would give work to the lawyers for the present, though it would greatly diminish legal work in the future.)

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Those are but a few sample indications of the hundred and one sternly necessary tasks at home which would face an honest, courageous administrator in the work of restoring the people to self-respect, the family to its proper functions, the State to its true dignity. There are other necessary tasks abroad: to let the world know that we are not "the conquered nation" of the War, but that we still have the power and the will to carry on our old mission of civilization with justice and firmness.

There are in our community men capable of the task, unless we are to presume that the

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British race has altogether degenerated. The leader will come with the occasion, and will be able to take over without grave disturbance, if the way is prepared for him *now* by the thoughtful and patriotic men and women of the community deciding that the present Parliamentary system is hopeless and setting themselves to the task of educating their neighbours for a change. Preparation is urgently necessary ; for the crisis—the bankruptcy of the system of pauperization and confiscation—is near at hand.

Presuming power to be confided to a man who can "heal our wounds and cleanse those sores that for long have festered", it would be necessary for a short term of years that he should have authority from the Monarch to administer without the interference of any demagogue ; that he should be, in effect, a Dictator.

Afterwards, the Augean stables cleared, what then ? To go back to the old system and relapse, after an interval to the old conditions ? Few of the nation, one may safely assume, would be willing for that. There would be, however, ample time to consider a sound constitutional

system which would secure representative government without the evil features of the present polyarchy.

This is a plan which seems to be possible and consistent with British thought.

The Government would rest in the hands of :

THE KING
through his
PRIME MINISTER
holding office during capacity and good
behaviour, advised by
THE CABINET
chosen from the wisest and most capable
experts in each branch of national adminis-
tration, consulting on policy,
THE PARLIAMENT
of two Houses, each of about 200 members,
THE SENATE
nominated chiefly from the Peers of the
Realm.
THE HOUSE OF COMMONS
chosen by the people under the jury system.

To explain this House of Commons "chosen under the jury system". It is, under the present polyarchy, a favourite fiction to speak of the House of Commons as "the Grand Inquest of the Nation", to compare the process of its election to that of the work of a jury empanelled for the trial of a cause. It would be difficult, however, to imagine a more false

comparison, since members of a jury are sworn to give honest and impartial consideration to the facts placed before them ; are carefully sheltered from all attempts at bribery and from misleading statements ; and have the assistance of a trained judicial mind to guide them to a clear appreciation of the issues to be decided.

But the oratorical fiction of the polyarchists offers a useful hint for a method of choosing a really representative Chamber. Divide the country into two hundred constituencies (either geographically or preferably by industries, agriculture so many, banking so many, medicine so many, every important interest having its representation). From each constituency would be chosen by lottery a jury of twelve, and they sworn to decide faithfully and honestly on the facts and arguments before them. Over each jury would preside a judge appointed for the purpose by the High Court of the Realm. Before each jury the candidates for election to the House of Commons would come and present their claims. It would be the function of the judge to keep out false or irrelevant evidence, and to sum up to the jury ; and the function of the jury, in secret consultation, to choose one of the candidates offering. If the constituencies were not geographical, but representative of

certain defined interests, the candidates for those constituencies would come naturally from those interests, from persons engaged in the particular profession or industry.

The members of the jury would be given some mark of honour for their services and not called upon for electoral duty again. A new House of Commons would be elected every five years by the same trial of candidates.

A House of Commons so chosen would be truly representative of the mass of the people ; would bring to the national administration the genuine voice of popular opinion, but it would be free from the influence of any bribery appeals and but little liable to be swayed by ignorant appeals. Representing all the great interests of the nation, it could give to the Government wise counsel ; could represent the intelligence and the patriotism, not the selfishness, of the people.

That is only a suggestion, advanced with the purpose of meeting the objection that there is no way out of the present system. There may be better suggestions to meet the two essential conditions : that no national administration can carry on in normal times without keeping in close touch with popular feeling ; and that no national administration can carry on honestly and efficiently when its policy is dictated by the

A BRITISH SOLUTION

results of appeals to the ignorant selfishness of the many from rival coteries of place-hunters. I put forward the juridical method because, in all the disorder and corruption of our public institutions, two fortresses of security still stand firm in the people's confidence—the judicial Bench and the jury.

CHAPTER IX

Waterloo Bridge

IN the Nineteenth Century Great Britain, having come out victorious from the struggle with Napoleon, named the bridge just completed across the Thames in the centre of London after Waterloo, the culminating battle of a great series of campaigns. Waterloo Bridge was fitting monument of a task which had severely strained the strength of the British race—a straightforward, level, purposeful bridge with no frippery ornamentation, its dignity deriving from the clear expression of a definite aim.

In the Napoleonic wars Great Britain had stood for the freedom of nations to develop their own characteristics ; had saved Europe from a despotism. Victory was won at the cost of great sacrifices, but the struggle had toughened, not weakened, the nation's fibre. The British people faced the future with a resolute confidence. Of this, Waterloo Bridge was a fit symbol.^c

A century later Great Britain came out

victorious from an even sterner struggle. The German people—led by their Prussian Spartans—had revived the Napoleonic idea of dominating Europe and had entered upon the enterprise with greater resources and with greater unscrupulousness, though with not the same genius. Before they were brought to defeat, almost the whole globe was engaged in the struggle, and the intricate system of world trade and finance was like a water-logged ship staggering out of a storm under a jury-mast. The task of restoration was of such difficulty as to be impossible except to the stoutest courage and the coolest wisdom. Clearly the British people had the courage. By sea, land, and air they had proved that, despite feebleness, vacillation, and petty partisan spirit at Whitehall. Whilst the politicians were chiefly busy with their palace intrigues of place, were wildly squandering the nation's treasure, were imposing their stupidities on the leaders of the Navy and Army (the escape of the *Goeben* and *Breslau* to Constantinople, the foolish Antwerp escapade, the tragic gamble of Gallipoli, the escape of Von Spee from Patey to the coast of Chile, the desperate and unnecessary thinness of the British line in March, 1918, were all due to political interferences); were treating the

people at home as if they were timid and possibly unruly children—the mass of the nation was fighting “a soldier’s battle” and winning through in spite of them.

The ordeal of battle over, the men of the Navy, the Army, and the Air Force having, with the patient loyal aid of the common folk at home, worthily completed their task—the nation was shown clearly to the world as an army of lions led by asses and rogue mules.

As if in sorrow and disgust, Waterloo Bridge began to sink into the river. It had been built by a nation which knew its own mind, which followed the straightforward road out of difficulties. Now the bridge seemed to wish to hide its head from sight and hearing of these chattering politicians orating about the Rosy Dawn and poisoning the public spirit with the drug of parasitism.

The treatment of the proud old bridge was in the spirit of the leadership of the age. It was given a dole, a crutch for its falling arches and a makeshift way to take some of the work off its shoulders; and committees set to talking of what to do. They are still talking. The bridge is still falling. Years pass and no one can order “Rebuild” or “Replace”.

Those who lived through 1914-1918 cannot be pessimistic regarding the British people, who have before them without a doubt a future greater even than their glorious past. With a quarter of the globe in their keeping, they will prove worthy of the trust because more than any other race of the world they have learned the lessons of endurance, of courage, of fair dealing, of rejoicing in the glory of resolute effort, of recognizing that work well done is its own reward. But only the blindest optimism can expect the British people to be equal to the heavy tasks confronting them under the present political system, which is incapable of evoking resolution and wisdom, and is spreading a creeping paralysis over every form of national energy. The Commonwealth cannot survive if it is not purged of its Catalines.

I repeat that those who lived through 1914-18 and saw the British people—confronted by a War, which their political leaders had represented as an impossible contingency whilst knowing in their secret hearts it was inevitable—organizing themselves for victory without leadership, cannot be pessimist.

Recall the London of 1914. Not since the days when a King hid a crafty statesmanship behind that best of all masks in England, a

ready and witty tongue—which proclaims the dilettante—had toyed with his dogs in St. James's Park, had London dreamed of war as anything but a foreign adventure, to be financed, to be kept from our shores and our vital interests by the strong arm of the sea—the sea which was the servant of the British, as anyone might know from the Bible, or was it Shakespeare? Or at any rate it was clear enough from the current Lloyds Register, than which there were no more Holy Scriptures.

Now War was knocking at the door of London. The fair counties around, Essex, Kent, Surrey, the city's dormitories and gardens and golf courses, were under suspended sentence of instant ravage and destruction, doomed to be made deserts if and when the enemy effected a landing: for, incredible, monstrous thought, it was possible that the enemy would effect a landing. The invincible guardian Fleet? Yes, but something had been forgotten. The Bulldog was in good fettle, but he had no kennel overlooking the North Sea backyard. Kennels there were if an intruder threatened from the Mediterranean or the Atlantic, but not one convenient for the watch over that Wet Triangle with Heligoland as its point. So the brave animal had to range about in the open

whilst there was improvised for him some shelter where he could chew his bone and snatch forty winks occasionally with one eye open.

It was an anxious matter, as the Old City knew, and drummed on its ledgers a little impatiently when the Mighty Orator who spoke for the silent Bulldog made fine promises that soon he would dig out the German Navy "like rats out of a hole". Brave words, but not fitting to describe a Bulldog's task. The Old City felt in her heart a little injured at this position. She had been very much wanting in foresight it was clear enough now, in some things, but for the Fleet there had been always a good housekeeping allowance. It should have had its kennel facing the North Sea. However, it was not quite too late, and the Treasure House doors were flung wide open.

Yet another anxiety London was beginning to know : that there was a way over the sea. That first Zeppelin attack on Antwerp made all think, not furiously, for it is not the habit of London people to be furious, but seriously. When Zeppelins, by the score perhaps, and aeroplanes, by the hundred perhaps, set out from enemy aeries to bombard the old, inviolate City? Something was to be done about that,

and Authority decided to give the City the comfort of anti-aircraft batteries formed from the light guns of the Horse Artillery, which were not much use in the field, since the Horse Artillery no longer had any function in this War. That they had no use at all against aircraft perhaps Authority knew, perhaps did not. At any rate, the guns made a noise and were reassuring. Everybody was only too anxious to be reassured and to welcome the slightest of encouragement. For London was, above all, and before all, determined that Authority must be trusted. Like Nelson, she kept a telescope firmly fixed to a blind eye. Whatever mistakes Authority had made in the past, or appeared to be making now, we must trust Authority. It was for lesser breeds to whine: "We are betrayed". Wise people, sound people, take their knock and come up again. To change leaders is to lose the value of experience, for the man who has made a mistake will probably not make the same mistake again. In effect, London—and in this she represented well enough the British Isles—had all the obstinate faith, the grim determination, the stubborn confidence, of a Committee of Patriotic Old Ladies.

Indeed, London, Great Britain, of the early

War days in all its muddle and confusion, was held firm in essentials by a figurative Committee of Old Ladies.

There was the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street, who knew that there are losses and gains, but that if you sit tight and play honestly and boldly borrow at four per cent and lend at five per cent, things come out right in the end. She had had one shock, when for a day and a night the Bank of England note was refused in the market-place, a blasphemy that she had never considered possible in this world or the next ; she would have tendered it with the fullest confidence for ferry fees across the Styx. But that was over. All was stable now. She made in her mental ledger calculations in millions and thousands of millions. The resources of the German Alliance in goods and credit represented so much : the resources of the British Alliance so much : excess balance in favour of the British Alliance an astronomical figure in millions something like those interesting fairy-tales from the Royal Observatory about distances to the moon and the sun. Then there were the resources of the neutral nations, another huge figure, and as good as belonging to London as soon as asked for on fair terms. Had not London always

met her obligations, borrowing at four per cent, lending at five per cent, raising up millions in any corner of the world by a telegraphed sentence? Yes, this Old Lady was quite confident. The balance-sheet foretold the end with those figures that never lie.

There was the Old Lady of Belgrave Square, who felt that the War was a judgement on the people for having tolerated so many new-fangled notions which were so obviously un-British, and letting the control of the country pass out of the hands of the gentlemen of the country. But this was not a time to say that. Our people were in trouble. Let us help. The blood of our sons, yes, and of our daughters, we must give: as much of it as wanted, and our wealth and our ease. It was going to be a severe War, and the Germans were showing very Bad Form, as might have been expected from their Kaiser, who had never seemed to be quite a gentleman. Well, the gentlemen of England would do their duty. And as for the working-classes, it was nonsense to doubt them. They were of the race. We must see that their wives and children did not suffer.

There was the Old Lady of South Kensington, who had a son in the Chinese Customs and

a daughter married into the Navy and almost always abroad, and the tomb of another son in Somaliland, which perhaps now she would never be able to visit. She planned how the administrative experience she had gained as the President in her district of the Society which urged you not to leave your domestic cat abandoned when you went to the seaside for the summer holiday, and offered you the conveniences of a holiday home for cats, could be turned to war work. She could not aspire to the noble rank of nurse, for she had not the experience. But she was a good housekeeper and expert in issuing circulars. She must see her Member of Parliament as quickly as possible. But her old friend, the sick Frau von Verten, living in the private hotel around the corner! Should she still call? To visit the sick of the enemy—was it quite patriotic? She thought, yes. They had met ever so many years ago in Switzerland, and the Frau had come to London this year at her suggestion. She would want help now perhaps to go back to Germany. Or perhaps she would stay in London until we had taken Berlin.

There was the Old Lady of Clapham, who had two sons, clerks in the City, and two

daughters, idlers at home, and who found that the War gave life a new interest. Her sons were both now in uniform but not yet called away to training camps. One daughter was a V.A.D., and the other had hopes. It was very foolish of these Germans to attack England. They should read their Bibles and learn that the English were the Chosen People and their destiny to rule the earth foretold.

There was the Old Lady of Wapping, whose man was a caretaker at the docks, and whose family was spread about the Kingdom at its tasks of digging, forging, weaving; and, partly because chance had given her the sheltering of a Belgian refugee, a poor grannie of Antwerp who had collapsed almost at her door on being taken from a barge, she was very bitter concerning the Germans and the need of "larning" them a lesson.

In the hearts of all these figurative Old Ladies never a doubt or tremor; and they told the spirit of the nation, not that iridescent scum of "smart people" to whom the War was a new chance of sensation, a new licence to folly; not that dreg of silent, cunning people who found in it the opportunity of enclosing the goods and spoiling the chances in life of

others, making for themselves a fatter and fatter mud from the blood of the generous and dutiful. Yes, this group of Old Ladies had the true spirit of Britain.

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But not so much of it in the high spheres of Authority—among those potentates, the Secretaries of State. Ah! here was a difference. Less certainty here, more bewilderment. Naturally, this lamentable affair had to be regarded chiefly in the light of the next General Election; and it was profoundly puzzling to know what the voters wanted. The Party machines could give little or no guidance. It seemed wise at the outset to try to be as conciliatory to the enemy as possible, to look at once for a formula on which peace could be patched up. But very clearly the voters did not want a formula, and thought of it was dropped, and there was talk of making war vigorously. Apparently, if the Press could be believed, the voters were pleased when the plump old *rusé* with a genius for organization had been chased out of the War Office on suspicion—largely an unjust suspicion—of being a philosopher, and supplanted by a popular soldier who was under no suspicion of being a

philosopher, and who had an admirably simple system of organization, that of plain multiplication; you multiply two by two, and again by two, and yet again, and so you get strength, irrespective of how much of an element of error existed in what you were multiplying. Well, the popular soldier must not be interfered with, though some curious products were coming of his system.

So much for the War Office. For the Admiralty the best possible had been done by providing it with the most brilliant Catherine Wheel in the whole stock of political *jeux d'artifice*. This dazzler had recently wanted to rocket off and lead a conquering army in Flanders. But he had been kept to his naval post and had been allowed the Gallipoli Gamble so that the Napoleon as well as the Nelson in him could be satisfied.

The War chest? Well, there would be nothing mean in regard to that. All that was asked for, and more, would be poured out. The voters would see that there was no grudging in the resolution to win the War at any cost to their purses.

So political Authority determined, and if it had any uneasiness that something more was wanted, something which could not come

clearly into their conception, since it was outside the order of their minds—well, nothing of that uneasiness was shown to the public. Perhaps, though, there was some evidence of that uneasiness in their angry contempt for the wild ideas suggested in some quarters ; that the nation should be organized, that this almost universal wish to do something, to sacrifice something, should be governmentally directed into the most fruitful channels. But everyone with any political sense must know that that would mean something like conscription, and the British people would never endure *that*.

But, in effect, the Committee of Old Ladies were in charge, and under their influence the nation organized itself, dispensing with political leadership.

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It was probably sound British instinct that, from 1914-18, kept things as they were ; left the politicians to their games and “make good” without them. But now the situation demands action.

The sentiment of affection and respect which is inspired by the “Mother of Parliaments” is founded on good reason. With its three

Estates, King, Lords, and Commons, it has done great work in the past to safeguard freedom of conscience, incorruptible justice and the sanctity of home and possessions. Once it was faithful guide and adviser to statesmen in their leadership of the nation. But that old Parliament of Great Britain has been long since dead. Of its three Estates two have been practically destroyed; the third tends to become with each election more and more a junta of delegates representing selfish and ignorant class interests, of men who will hold out with the most artfulness the prospect to the voters that they can win their bread and circuses without working for them. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, if he really believes—which I doubt—in the Karl Marx doctrine of class war and the realization of human happiness by tearing down the fabric of Society so that every citizen may have half a brick to throw at his fellow-citizen, must smile grimly to-day at the reflection that his old-time idea to establish a Soviet system in England was foolishly impatient: the work of destruction of our nation is being more surely and almost as quickly carried out—with the co-operation of the other political leaders—on the present lines of confiscation and pauperization. The “Soviet” savagery would never have appealed

to any but an alien minority in our country, whose people are not in the main envious but are "good sports". But the present-day political poison is subtle : it is quickly corroding the national character.

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Within the last few weeks clear necessity has compelled the abrogation of the Parliamentary system of government by Parliaments chosen by the votes of the ignorant, in Malta and in Egypt ; and there has been published a convincing exposure of the evils for which it has been responsible in India. Australia, too, is facing a grave economic crisis, chiefly due to the same political causes. These are portents. In Malta a priests' squabble has been able to make the ballot-box ridiculous. Egypt, which we rescued from anarchy and by firm, honest administration, made one of the most flourishing countries in the world, is slipping back to anarchy because of the Parliamentary folly which, as a serpent concealed in a dish of refreshing fruit, we brought to its table. India, which our politicians sought to make "politically minded"—somewhat as a morphia addict seeks to drag down others into the toils which are

strangling him—is to-day suffering grave evils and may be on the threshold of evils still graver.

Australia is a still graver portent. There a nation of our own blood, and therefore with a strong resistance to the evils of bad government, has been brought to serious peril by a succession of leaders playing the game of politics just as it is played to-day in the Home Country. Australia will recover, and recover quickly, if the political ulcer can be extirpated. But Great Britain could never recover if she allows herself to drift as far as did Australia—or as did Italy—since so much of her power and wealth comes from her position as the financial and insurance centre of the world, and she is so greatly dependent on imported food and raw materials.

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If from out of one of the political parties there emerged a man who had the courage to lead, and to make a straightforward appeal to the people for authority to sweep away the evils which are ~~choking~~ every channel of national activity and to abolish the system responsible for them, I believe the voters would respond with the knowledge that they were passing a

self-denying ordinance which would deprive them of the chance of ever becoming again the victims of the demagogues. In the course of a systematic series of inquiries I have found no man or woman of any class of life who was content with the ignominious and disastrous administration of the nation, and who was not disillusioned as to all three of the political parties and sceptical regarding any real betterment coming out of a change from Tweedledum to Tweedledee or Tweedledoo.

But no appeal in the spirit of the politics of the last quarter of a century, an appeal inspired by the spirit of making the utmost possible concession to the appetite for bribery and delusion, will serve. What is called for is the sublime audacity which will treat the people of England as in the mass sensible, honest, patriotic : to say to them : " You have been flattered too long with dishonest promises ; we make no promises : we offer to lead you along a hard and toilsome path ; we ask of you sacrifices ; all that we can offer of consolation is that the path will lead to safety, dignity, honour."

A straightforward appeal, founded in faith, might bring the regeneration of Parliament by the verdict of a General Election, in spite of

PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT: A FAILURE?

the corruption and chicanery which has been allowed to invade every phase of the process of appeal to the people. Failing that, the saving change will have to be sought by other means, or the British Empire perish.



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